

## APPENDIX H: Response to Public Comments on Draft FWA INRMP

### H-1. Introduction

Thank you for your comments on the Fort Wainwright 2002-2006 Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP). It was USARAK's desire to involve many people and organizations in the public comment period and we are grateful for your participation.

By clarifying the INRMP, we feel that we can balance the needs of the military mission with recreational use while protecting the environment as mandated by the Sikes Act Improvement Act (SAIA). Once again, thank you for your participation in the public process. Your comments have helped to strengthen and improve our management of the natural resources on Fort Wainwright.

### H-2. General Comments Received and Response to Comments

The following section summarizes all 287 comments received into ten categories: recreational vehicle ban, recreational vehicle restrictions, recreational access, Tanana Flats Training Area (TFTA) ownership and management responsibility, military use of TFTA, hunting, game management, environmental impacts of recreational use, clean-up, and the public involvement process.

#### 1. Ban

**General Comment 1a.** Oppose total ban

**General Comment 1b.** Support total ban

**Response 1.** USARAK has not proposed to ban any recreational access into TFTA, except into pre-existing munition impact areas. USARAK is proposing to only allow access within TFTA to areas that can support motorized recreational vehicle use without damaging sensitive wetlands. Hunting is not restricted in TFTA, except in impact areas. Hunters may continue to use airboats to hunt in the TFTA, although airboats must comply with the requirements stated in General Response 3.

#### 2. Proposed Recreational Vehicle Use Policy

**General Comment 2a.** Oppose restrictions on ORV use in TFTA.

**General Comment 2b.** Support restrictions on ORV use in TFTA.

**Response 2.** *USARAK is proposing to implement a new recreational vehicle use policy on Fort Wainwright.* The 1998-2002 Fort Wainwright INRMP determined that certain recreational vehicle use was incompatible with resource stewardship goals in the TFTA and proposed that a new ORV use policy be reviewed and implemented in the 2002-2006 update. Studies indicate that recreational vehicle use is damaging wetlands in TFTA and is increasing. The National Environmental Policy Act and Army Regulation 200-3 state that any activity suspected of causing environmental impacts is to be stopped until study proves otherwise. USARAK reviewed existing Alaska Federal and State Land Use and Off Road Vehicle policies. EO 11989 (Off-Road Vehicles on Public Lands) states that "the respective agency head shall, whenever he determines that the use of off-road vehicles will cause or is causing considerable adverse effects on the soil, vegetation, wildlife, wildlife habitat or cultural or historic resources of particular areas or trails of the public lands, immediately close such areas or trails to the type of off-road vehicle causing such effects, until such time as such adverse effects have been eliminated and that measures have been taken implemented to prevent such occurrence". The USFWS recommends a conservative management approach, which includes placing fen wetlands off-limits to airboat activity. The current ORV use policy leaves USARAK open to potential litigation (for instance, the National Park Service received an injunction to stop airboat use until they completed an Environmental Impact Study). More importantly, TFTA promises to play a key role in the success of the proposed transformation of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade to an Interim Brigade Combat Team. It is USARAK's goal to allow the maximum amount of recreational access and use (both public and military) within the framework of the military mission and the capability of the

environment to sustain that use. USARAK also has a Federal resource stewardship responsibility to ensure that these public lands are maintained for perpetuity. After review of existing Alaska Federal and State land use and off road vehicle policies, USARAK intends to emulate these policies in managing its withdrawn lands. Pursuant to EO 11989, the ORV Recreational Access Policy has been proposed to place the same limitations on recreational access within Fort Wainwright as already apply to military vehicles.

The new recreational vehicle use policy will allow access within TFTA to areas that can support motorized recreational vehicle use without damaging sensitive wetlands. In 1999, USARAK obtained a five-year Section 404 Clean Water Act wetlands permit from the Corps of Engineers that restricts military vehicular maneuver in sensitive wetlands while the ground is unfrozen. Through the permitting process, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) were instrumental in helping the Corps of Engineers develop the criteria for defining these sensitive wetlands. As part of its land stewardship responsibilities, USARAK is proposing to impose the same limitations on recreational use in sensitive wetlands that USARAK already has imposed on military use.

### **3. Recreational Access.**

**General Comment 3.** Keep TFTA open to all types of public use for all users.

**Response 3.** It is USARAK's goal to allow the maximum amount of recreational access and use (both public and military) within the framework of the military mission and the capability of the environment to sustain that use. Access onto Fort Wainwright training areas, including TFTA, is controlled by Fort Wainwright Range Control. Contact Range Control on a daily basis to determine if a training area is open and to gain access for recreational use. Rules for recreational access are the same for both military and public users. For instance, if an area is temporarily closed for military training, it is off-limits for both military and public recreational users.

We have chosen not to change the recreational use of most of TFTA, as defined in Figure 6-1a, from "modified" to "open". However, we have modified an existing category on that map from "ATV trails" to "motorized watercraft trails" and have identified a number of existing trails and open channel waterways in TFTA that are open to all watercraft in the summer. The airboat restriction statement on the legend of Figure 6-1a has been removed. The Open Use category will no longer include "except airboats".

We have chosen to clarify the language in Section 6.2.4 of the INRMP as follows:

**Recreational Use Management Areas:** Fort Wainwright is managed for a number of different types of public recreational use. All areas that are determined open for recreational use may be closed temporarily during periods of military use. All users must daily check in with Fort Wainwright Range Control Office to determine if areas are open to recreational use. USARAK uses the following classification system to classify recreation areas on the installation. These overlays are available to the public by contacting the Fort Wainwright Range Control Office.

*Open:* recreational areas open to all types of recreation during all seasons, unless closed by the Fort Wainwright Range Control Office.

*Modified:* recreational areas open to all non-motorized recreation (hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, skiing, and berry picking) but do not support and are not open to any type of ORV activity, except when there is 6+ inches of ice and snow cover.

*Limited:* recreational areas open to all non-motorized recreation (hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, skiing, and berry picking), but do not support and are not open to any type of ORV at any time.

*Off-limits:* areas restricted to public access and use year-round.

*Summer Trails:* Summer trails are open to ORVs under 1,500 pounds (ATVs, snowmachines, dirt bikes etc.) year-round. Summer

trails are open to ORVs over 1,500 pounds (road vehicles, dune buggies, Argos, SUSVs etc.) when there is 6+ inches of ice and snow cover.

*Winter Trails:* Winter trails are open to all ORVs when there is 6+ inches of ice and snow cover.

*Motorized Watercraft Trails:* All motorized watercraft may use only existing naturally occurring channels, watercourses, and waterways. Area is open to ORVs during frozen conditions. Motorized watercraft must maintain safe and prudent speed at all times..

These areas are shown in figures 6-1a, 6-1b and 6-1c.

#### ***4. Ownership and Management Responsibility***

**General Comment 4.** TFTA is public land, belongs to all Alaskans and depends on public's good will to use it.

**Response 4.** The majority of the lands currently used by USARAK are on long-term withdrawals and withdrawn from public domain specifically for military uses. Provisions for management of these lands are generally specified in each of the Public Laws, Public Land Orders, or Executive Orders, which authorized the military use and responsibility of the lands.

TFTA (654,700 acres) was temporarily withdrawn from public land in 1941 through EO 8847 and 9526. In 1962, PLO 2676 removed the expiration of use from EO 8847 and 9526, and the TFTA was withdrawn indefinitely for military uses.

Whenever the military uses withdrawn public land, it incurs legal responsibilities for the stewardship of the land and its resources. USARAK land is withdrawn from other public use to the military to enhance military readiness in the interest of national defense. When these lands were specifically withdrawn for military purposes, they were not intended to be managed for multiple uses. USARAK is required to manage these land primarily for national security purposes (e.g., training and test-

ing), however, USARAK is also required to manage these lands to accommodate additional uses as long as they do not impinge on the primary military readiness mission.

Residual responsibility for USARAK withdrawn lands remains with the Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management. BLM, retains interest in the stewardship of the these lands even though the land is under DOD's long-term management. Multiple use of the lands it manages is an integral part of the mission of the BLM. As defined by Federal Lands Policy Management Act (FLPMA), multiple use implies that each authorized use of the land has an equal level of priority. DOD, on the other hand, is a single mission agency. As such, it has a single, mission-oriented use for the land it manages: military readiness for national defense. The quality of life of DOD's personnel is also an important component of DOD's national defense mission. In support of their specific missions, DOD's services and agencies implement a variety of land management practices on their installations that support military readiness and quality of life programs. For DOD, therefore, multiple use is an approach to land management rather than an element of its mission. A variety of land management tools such as hunting, fishing, nature trail maintenance, watchable wildlife programs, and the maintenance of groomed open spaces may be used in the INRMP in support of both quality of life programs and military training and testing requirements. By using a mix of these land management tools, DOD undertakes a multiple use approach to land management while still meeting the single mission use of the land (military readiness for national defense). An important aspect of this type of multiple-use approach to land management, however, is that it is employed only to the extent that it does not conflict with the military training and testing components of the overall national defense/readiness mission of USARAK.

At the regional level, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) agrees that the draft INRMP adequately balances military mission, habitat protection, and the public use of the military withdrawal.

## 5. Military Use

**General Comment 5.** Military does not use Tanana Flats and no military/public conflicts exist; therefore no restrictions are warranted.

**Response 5.** The United States has adopted an international political and military strategy that requires the nation's military forces to be ready to deploy on short notice for engagement anywhere in the world. The American people rightly expect these forces to be highly trained and equipped with the highest-performance materiel and technology available. Ready, capable forces result from repetitive training. New or modified weaponry and other equipment must be field-tested before being placed with the using units.

Because of the speed and maneuverability of modern armaments, today's and tomorrow's armed forces require large tracts of land for training and weapons testing. Changes in tactical doctrine and weapons technology designed to dissuade any would be-aggressor, and to win battles and minimize casualties to American and allied forces in the event of armed conflict, are increasing the need for such land despite reductions in the size of the U.S. military since the Cold War and the closure of some military installations.

TFTA is a valuable and important training area for both the Army and Air Force in Alaska. While military vehicular maneuver is restricted from sensitive wetlands during the summer, TFTA provides many other vital training opportunities year-round. TFTA will play an important role in the transformation of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade to an Interim Brigade Combat Team. Until now, few conflicts have occurred between recreational users and military training in TFTA because of the excellent cooperation between the public and civilian users and the military. However, the amount of airboat use in TFTA continues to increase (almost 20% since 1989). During that same time period, the number of areas available for airboat use has decreased (Copper River Delta Area closed in mid 1990's, Minto Flats closed in 1995 and Nenana Controlled Use Area closed in 1996, and Bristol Bay Controlled Use Area limited entry in 2002).

The recreational vehicle use pressure on TFTA will continue to increase. Increased use of the TFTA by recreational vehicle users and anticipated increases in use by USARAK as a result of transformation may lead to significant conflicts.

## 6. Hunting

**General Comment 6.** Restrictions affect subsistence / airboats required to hunt

**Response 6.** The proposed ORV policy does not restrict hunting on Fort Wainwright, except in impact areas. Hunters may continue to use airboats to hunt in the TFTA, although airboats must comply with the requirements stated above. Limitations on the use of motorized watercraft is not expected to affect subsistence users. USARAK allows the same exceptions to handicapped individuals for hunting from motorized vehicles as does the State of Alaska.

## 7. Game Management

**General Comment 7.** Ban on airboats negatively affects moose populations

**Response 7.** The proposed ORV use policy will not significantly impact game management on Fort Wainwright. The Wildlife Conservation Division of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game states the proposed ORV restrictions will not significantly impact their management goals for the flats or hunter success rates overall. In calendar year 2000, ADF&G also stated that 618 moose were officially reported taken in Unit 20a, but only 38 were reported taken by airboat. Statewide harvest totals for moose have not significantly changed since 1990, even though seasonal restrictions on the use of any motorized vehicles for big game hunting have been implemented in a number of areas, such as Delta, Glacier Mountain, Wood River, Macomb Plateau, Yanert, and LaDue River Controlled Use Areas. The Sport Fish Division states that there is little game fish utilization in areas of the Tanana Flats that are not directly connected to river systems. Fishing that does occur in the area within the streams and sloughs will remain open to public access. Angling opportunity should not be impacted (negatively or beneficially) by the proposed access restrictions.



## 8. Environmental Impacts

**General Comment 8a.** Airboats/ORVs don't cause any damage

**General Comment 8b.** No scientific proof that this is a problem.

**General Comment 8c.** All damage caused by military use.

**Response 8.** *Recreational use on Fort Wainwright is damaging sensitive wetlands.* On TFTA, airboats are primarily used from May through October for hunting, and recreation. Airboats are well suited for use on the shallow Chena and Tanana Rivers, as well as on a unique system of floating mat fens in TFTA (Racine et. al. 1998). Since these floating mat fens are characterized as sensitive wetlands in the Clean Water Act Section 404 military use wetlands permit, USARAK is proposing management action to minimize impacts to these sensitive wetlands from both military and recreational users. Based on research concluded to date, the USFWS has concluded that changes in the fen habitats of the Tanana Flats are occurring as a result of airboat activity. Preliminary evidence based on the 1989 study on the environmental impacts of airboats on the Tanana Flats suggested that the floating mats should be fairly resistant to airboat damage (Racine et. al 1990). However, further evidence, as outlined in a more detailed 1995 study appearing in Arctic, showed that "the vegetation and soils of floating mat fens in the Tanana Flats have been severely damaged along main airboat trails: there are over 100 km of trails with open-water, stream-like channels on which all of the emergent vegetation and about 50% of the underlying mat have been destroyed" (Racine et. al. 1998).

*Environmental impacts from recreational use on Fort Wainwright are increasing.* "In 1989, the total length of trails was 263 km, of which 37% (99 km) were heavily used main trails, 54% (143 km) were less-used secondary trails, and 8% (22 km) were trails on existing streams. By 1995, the total length of airboat trails had increased by 15%, to 303 km. During that period, trails were extended toward the southeast into the Tanana Flats, from 17 km from the Tanana River access points in 1989 to 26 km by 1995." (Racine et. al. 1998). By 1999, total length

of trails in northwest TFTA had expanded to 314 km. These 314 km trails impact approximately 161 acres of sensitive wetlands, 78 acres of which are permanently damaged by main trails (USARAK, 2001), which do not recover within a few years like abandoned secondary trails (Racine et. al. 1998).

USARAK is proposing to implement a Training Area Recovery Plan (TARP) program, a rotational system of rest, rehabilitation, and erosion control as part of the proposed action (see Section 4.1.4.1). Each training area on Fort Wainwright will be taken out of rotation and placed off-limits to military and recreational vehicle once every ten years for a period of two years. Maintenance actions for erosion control, LRAM, range maintenance, and roads and grounds maintenance will be scheduled during the first year each training area is scheduled for rest and repair, although emergency actions to repair damage must take place anytime, anyplace.

*USARAK is proposing to conduct another more detailed study to assess the impacts of recreational vehicles on sensitive wetlands and to evaluate the potential indirect impacts on hydrology, effects of noise on wildlife, and conflicts among hunters.* During the multi-year study, the study area will be divided into three parts. One part will be open to all types of recreational use with no restrictions or limitations, one part will be placed totally off-limits to all military and recreational vehicle use (except those involved in the study), and the third part will be used only for controlled experiments to determine impacts. The proposed study boundaries are shown in Figure 6-1d. The study boundaries may be subject to modification based on the requirements of the experimental design parameters. A small amount of currently used trails must be included in the off-limits areas for the study to study regeneration. If the study reveals at any time significant damage occurring in the portion of the study area open to all types of recreational use, USARAK may choose to place limitations on recreational use as described above. If the study reveals that there are no significant long-term impacts to sensitive wetlands from recreational vehicle use, then USARAK will re-evaluate the proposed ORV access policy in five years during the next update of the INRMP.

## **9. Clean-Up**

**General Comment 9.** Military should clean up TFTA (UXO and trash-scrap metal).

**Response 9.** USARAK is currently engaged in a program to clean up all trash, scrap metal, and illegal structures on Fort Wainwright, including TFTA, except in impact areas. Due to safety reasons, scrap metal (old targets) and unexploded ordinance (UXO) is not removed from impact areas. In addition, DoD policy is to exclude UXO clean up in active ranges. Procedures for identifying, investigating, and restoring contaminated or potentially contaminated sites is found in the Management Guidance for the Defense Environmental Restoration Program.

Clean-up of contaminated sites is conducted under the Installation Restoration Program and current clean-up actions on Fort Wainwright can be found in the Fort Wainwright Installation Action Plan.

### ***Subject 10. Public and Agency Involvement***

**General Comment 10a.** Requests for information about the process

**General Comment 10b.** Not happy with the process

**General Comment 10c.** Army trying to deceive/backdoor process

**General Comment 10d.** Agencies did not know about it.

**Response 10.** Significant public involvement was a primary objective of USARAK during the development of the INRMP. Public participation in the development of the INRMP has been promoted throughout the development of the proposed plan by way of newspaper notices, questionnaires, newsletters, and state and federal agency review.

USARAK informed the public of its intent to update the INRMP through a public notice published in the Daily News Miner on 11 March and 14 March 2001. The intent to update the INRMP was also briefed to the public on 23 January 2001 at the Fort Wainwright Restoration Advisory Board, a meeting open to the public. An informational newsletter containing a questionnaire / survey form was mailed to individuals listed in Fort Wainwright's Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing (HTF) permit database and the Alaska Army Lands Withdrawal

Renewal Legislative Environmental Impact Statement mailing list.

The questionnaire / survey forms that were received were used to develop the initial alternatives and to identify issues important to the public. Very few survey forms concerning outdoor recreational use of TFTA were received at that time.

The Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) all are INRMP signatory partners, as mandated by the Sikes Act Improvement Act (SAIA). The USFWS, ADF&G, BLM (Northern District Office and Alaska Fire Service) have provided an integral and essential role in the development and review of the first, second, third, and final drafts of the INRMP. USARAK notified these agencies of its intent to update the INRMP on 26 December 2000. All of these agencies participated in INRMP review meetings in Fairbanks on 22 February 2001, 29 March 2001, 26 April 2001, 24 May 2001, 28 June 2001, 16 August 2001, and 31 January 2002.

Public review of the INRMP is required by both the Sikes Act Improvement Act (SAIA) and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). Because of the Finding of No Significant Impact on the INRMP, the Environmental Assessment public review process was followed. In addition to the 30 day public review period as required by NEPA, USARAK extended the first public review period for an additional 30 days.

A notice of availability was published in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner on July 1, 4, 8, 11, 15, 18, 22, 25, 29 and August 1 2001 to inform the public of the availability of the draft INRMP for public review during 2 July through 1 August 2001. Individuals on the mailing list were also sent a newsletter in June 2001 informing them that the draft INRMP was available for review. During the comment period, a number of comments were received requesting that the comment period be extended, so USARAK extended the public comment period through 31 August 2001.

During the public review period, interested parties were invited to submit, in writing, comments or

objections they had regarding the proposed action. Copies of the INRMP were available at the Noel Wien Public Library in Fairbanks, the North Pole Public Library in North Pole, the Delta Community Library in Delta Junction, the Environmental Office at Fort Wainwright, and the Environmental Office at Fort Greely. Draft INRMPs were also made available for public review on the USARAK conservation web site [www.usarak.army.mil/conservation](http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation). Because of security concerns over a virus being circulated during the public review period, USARAK closed all its web sites to public access. During the second half of the review period, the INRMP was available on the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce web site.

Largely due to the volume of public comments related to recreation vehicle use and the valid criticism that the INRMP contained conflicting statements concerning recreation vehicle policy, USARAK decided to make another draft INRMP available for public review. The final draft INRMP contains a revised proposal on recreational vehicle use and contains the comments and response to comments received during the first comment period. The public is again urged to provide comments on the final draft during this process. Draft copies of the INRMP will be made available at the Noel Wien Public Library in Fairbanks, the North Pole Public Library in North Pole, the Delta Community Library in Delta Junction, the Environmental Office at Fort Wainwright, and the Environmental Office at Fort Greely. Draft INRMPs will also be made available for public review on the USARAK conservation web site [www.usarak.army.mil/conservation](http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation) and the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce web site.

USARAK currently has a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) consisting of citizens interested in and providing comments on restoration and clean up activities on Fort Wainwright. Because of the increasing interest in community involvement with recreation and other natural resource issues, USARAK is considering expanding the scope of the RAB to a "Community Advisory Board", which will deal with all environmental issues on Fort Wainwright. If and when that decision is made, announcements for upcoming meetings and

vacant board positions will be advertised in the Fairbanks Daily News Miner.

### H-3. Individual Comments and Response

Following are comments reprinted as they were received by e-mail or letter.

**11-Mar-01**  
**Jim DeWitt**

Comment: Please place me on the mailing list for the informational newsletter for these plans? Are there drafts of the plans available for review on the Web? If so, may I have the URL? My US Mail address is

*Response: Information provided*

**19-Jul-01**  
**Ron Routh**

Comment: hello my name is ron routh i am wrighting in regards to the closuer and restriction to air boats on military un used land tannana flats specificaly.artical #6-1a. my dad and i have hunted out there in the swamps with airboats for 30 years,we have not caused any change in the habbitat or enviroment over this period of time ,it seems the army is trying to get this passed with no fuss well let me assure you ,we need access to this unused land to hunt moose. i am a veteran and my father was the bassette hospital commander there on ft. wainwright he is now retired and 73 years old.the local airboat club i am sure will also bo there necks to this issue. in all the years we have put up with the mess the army made in the flats ie old blown up stuff etc.this is a joint benifit thing for citisens and the army,look foward to hearing more about this issue of closuer. sincerely

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8.*

**20-Jul-01**  
**Lee Olsen**

Comment: Hi I Talked To You This Morning About The Managment Plan For The Flats To Keep Airbaoats Out I Keep Trying To Pull It Up On My Computer And On Other Ones Around Town It Will Not Come Up Do You Know Why Our What We Are Doing Wrong [www.usarak.army.mil/conservation](http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation) Is What Im Putting In And Nothing Is Happening Thank You.

*Response: Information provided*

**23-Jul-01**  
**Lee C. Olsen**

Comment: To How It My Concern My Name Is, I Am Writing In Concern To The Airboat Restriction In The Tanana Flat I Have Been Hunting In The Tanana Flats For Close To 23 Years With Varies Types Of Equipment I Have A Airboat That I Hunt With Now And Being A 50% Disabled Vet It Helps Me In Accessing And Hunting The Tanana Flats And I Do Not Have A Trespass Cabin In The Flats. I Don't Know How Are Why You Are Trying To Restrict Airboats From The Tanana Flat In Most Areas In The Flats, That Is The Only Way Out There Other Then Helicopters, And We All Know We Can't Us Helicopters For Hunting And As Far As Damage To The Environment There Is None People Have Used Airboats There For Just About 40 Years. Another Problem That You Will Be Causing Is People Having To Go

Hunting Some Place Else The Idiot We Have For A Governor Has Screwed the State Of Alaska Up With The Wildlife That The Tanana Flats Is One Of The Last Places Left With Good Moose Hunting. If This Is Implemented I Will Fill Charges With The Federal Government For Discrimination Because I'm A Disabled vet And Not Being Able To Use My Airboat On Federal Grounds Where I Have Been Using It For Years To Hunt And Fish To Feed My Family.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 6.*

**26-Jul-01**

**Mike Tinker**

Comment: The Fairbanks Advisory Committee has been supportive of the Army of the renewal of the land use plan. We have been supportive of the plan based on presentations to our committee this spring that the existing uses of the non-intensive military areas would continue to be available to Fairbanksans for hunting, fishing and recreational purposes. It has now been brought to our attention and we have reviewed the web site that the new version of the plan recommends eliminating long time traditional access for ORVs and especially airboats. We note that the restrictions come with no statement identifying and explaining the negative impact(s) to either the environment or the Army's mission in Alaska. Throughout the Federal land management agencies processes we find that traditional uses not in conflict with the proposed mission must be maintained unless negative effects and impacts are observed or predicted with a high degree of probability. The FAC is concerned that the planners brought us one story that met our concerns and asked our support and now have reversed their position without letting us know. We object to this change without notification to those of us who expressed concern in the first place. Just for the record, we have read the Corps of Engineers (and others) reports on the impact of ORVs including airboats on the natural environment including wetlands. Those publications indicate that there is virtually no effect much less a negative impact from operating these vehicles. We request that you provide the negative effect determination for our review. We believe that your objectives of maintaining recreational opportunity for hunting and fishing and having the Army be a good neighbor to the Fairbanks community are important. You should not disregard the value of sharing use of these lands without some good solid reasons. The recommendations restricting access lead in the direction of restricting long term traditional use by the Fairbanks community. You must realize that summer and fall access are the most important to our constituents. If the Army is headed in that direction, please let us know. There are many local and state lands and resources presently open to members of the Army and their dependents. The sharing needs to go both ways. The Department of Fish and Game has expended a lot of energy over the years to provide a stable big game population in game management unit 20 A. It would be a significant problem for Fairbanks hunters if they cannot access those areas to hunt and fish. If you go forth with the present recommendations, please list and explain the negative impact to local hunters in your planning documents. Sincerely

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 10.*

**30-Jul-01**

**Mike Stredny**

Comment: Concerning the Army's Finding of No Significant Impact on the EA concerning the implementation of the INRMP. First, I find fault with the Army for writing their own EA and their lack of enforcement concerning federal law. A case in point on page 285, federal laws (1) Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (2) Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. Read 4.2 Watershed Management to 4.2.1 Goals and Objectives followed by the disclaimer at the end (p. 107-108) "Erosion has not been identified as a significant threat to water quality". Now go back and read both of the laws listed as (1) and (2). The Army is in violation of federal law (as well as state law). No where in either laws is there an exception for a water quality violator to forego remediation because of a lack of funding. Examples: (1) Two Nike missile sites known to the Army to contain contaminants that are exposed to water and air and yet they are not even stabilized/contained let alone cleaned up after 30+ years. (2) Bombing debris on the Delta River and Delta Creek actually in the water channel. There is enough white fluorescence residue from flares on Delta Creek that a blind man could see them. (3) Massive erosion from bombing along a clear water salmon stream, South Fork of the Chena River, Yukon Range. The Army cannot both write and enforce their own EA. Example: Ft. Greely, 2.3.3.2 Birds 3rd paragraph - the 1983 survey that found "only" 8 trumpeter swans. After 30+ years of military activity can that be used as a baseline study/Forward to 2.3.3.5, 3rd paragraph "list species as sensitive" and "the species require special management to maintain viable populations". Yet the INRMP does not specify those special management practices to protect swans, or a number of swans that would trigger such practices. The military has pushed the trumpeter swans to near extinction on public land leased to them at Ft. Greely. A section to be added to the MOA, detailing when a set number of swans are not present, areas of habitat are to be off-limits (no summer flying) until those numbers are met. Set number should be at least 4 pair of breeding swans. Crances 2.3.4.2 you designate roosting areas but no mention of the "major flyway" of cranes and all migratory birds that gather in the Delta Area over Fort Greely. Under MOA 6.4 Watershed Management 2nd paragraph "USARAK recognizes that the release of contaminants in the environment and response actions to clean up those contaminants may result in adverse impacts to natural resources". Again, under federal laws our public land and water must be cleaned up. The Army's hypocrisy of knowingly contaminating said lands and not cleaning them up is a form of criminal negligence. On public access 3.4.5.1 paragraph 5 - DOD's directive 4715.3. The Army needs to follow its own law and recognize the State of Alaska's lawful right of RS-2477 R/W's on public land. From Appendix, p 284 Federal law National Trails System Act of 1968, a policy to develop a national trails system needs to be implemented. Under MOA 6.1 Access. A listing of all historic trails should be made, working with the state of Alaska, DNR. These need to be researched, documented, and marked on the ground. These should be jointly managed by BLM, the state of Alaska, and the Army. Submitted by.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to response 9.*



**1-Aug-01**  
**Bill Dixon**

Comment: The proposed closer of the Tanana Flats to off road vehicles and airboats would be a severe blow to the Hunters, fishermen, and general recreational users in this area. I personally have been hunting and using this area year-round for over eleven years and have seen no long term damage to the environment from the use of off road vehicles. More damage has been done through the years from left over military oils, drums full of god knows what and unspent and spent ammunition . I am not a biologist but I believe the negative effect on the game management of this area would suffer if this proposal goes through. Not only would this area suffer but the surrounding areas that can be used would be over run with the people that could no longer use the Flats. I know the Army uses some of the areas regularly but in the area I use I have only encountered military personnel one time in eleven years. The news paper stated the Army sent out question news letters to individuals that registered to use the land last year. I and four other individuals that had permits last year received no such letters. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9.*

**1-Aug-01**  
**Bob Watts**

Comment: In todays Fairbanks Daily News Miner (page B 1) there is an article that states "Army wants to ban airboats, 4-wheelers in Tanana Flats." The Army refused to give a reason for the proposed closure. Fort Wainwright Natural Resource Coordinator Deb Lipyanic refused to discuss the reason for the proposed closure until the public comment period ends (today). It is my understand that the proposed closure to airboats and 4-wheelers possibly was not in the original "Army's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the years 2002-2006" but was later inserted into the plan. The Army advised that the current proposed plan could be reviewed on the Internet at [www.usarak.army.mil/](http://www.usarak.army.mil/) conversation. My requests to review the proposed plan at that address were unsuccessful. The site announced that the site was unavailable. The language of the airboat and 4-wheeler ban is buried somewhere in this 200+ page document. It would not be unreasonable to believe that hiding this "ban" within that document was intentional. There is no logical reason for the proposed closure of the Tanana Flats to airboats and 4-wheelers. It is a swampy area that is inaccessible by any other form of transportation. I have been hunting in the Tanana Flats since 1978. I now take by grandson there hunting during Moose season and hope to be able to continue using that recreation area. A study done some 8 - 10 years ago by the US Army Corps of Engineers proved there was no harm by airboats and in fact the airboat trails assisted in the water flow through the wetland system there. It has never been used by the Army for any purpose whatsoever. The Army stated that it had sent out two editions of an "environmental resources newsletter" to individuals who registered for a hunting, trapping and fishing Permit to hunt on military land last year. This infers but clearly does not state "Tanana Flats" military land. I have been registering to hunt on the Tanana Flats military land ever since this requirement was initiated and I did NOT received any "environmental resources" newsletter what so ever. I could believe that one may have been misplaced by the Post Office but having two newsletters mis-placed is not believable. How

were they sent? 1st class? Bulk mail? Out of two mailings I would have received at least one if they were sent out as stated. There is no stated logical, scientific, or biological reason for the proposed ban on airboats and 4-wheelers. The Army has refused to give any reason at all. I can only believe that the "ban" is the result of one Army person approving this concept from a small group of Army personnel trying to impose their own personal philosophical views on permanent residents of central Alaska who happen to use airboats or 4-wheelers for recreational purposes (hunting, sightseeing, fishing, etc) in the Tanana Flats. This "ban" will be in effect long after these Army personnel rotate out of the State of Alaska. The citizens of Alaska who remain here will continue to suffer the impact of this "ban". Please delete any reference to banning airboats and 4-wheelers from utilizing the Tanana Flats from the proposed Army's Natural Resources Management Plan.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01**  
**BOBBY L. CRENSHAW,**

Comment: Get real! This closure has no apparent scientific or logical basis. It appears that it was not coordinated with AK Dept of Fish & Game either. The Flats are the prime moose habitat in the state. What about lost snowmobile recreational opportunities. Who is going to enforce this? Does FTWW have that many MPs looking for work? This is an extremely poor idea. I am AGAINST this proposal and will voice my concerns to my elected officials.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**1-Aug-01**  
**Carey Bliss, Michelle Bliss, Nicolas Bliss, Bud Bliss, Lily Bliss, William Fogelman, Adam Fogelman, Perry Fogelman, Seth Fogelman, Frank Cooney, Laura Palomino, David Van Vilet, Tommy Van Vilet**

Comment: We are opposed to the ban of airboats and other OR V's in the Tanana Flats. We have enjoyed the flats for years and it would be a great shame to take that away.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**1-Aug-01**  
**CARL BUTZ, CHARLENE BRANTLEY, BRENT BROCKWAY, JEFF LANDRUS, JAMES KOHLER (RETIRED US AJRMY), NANCY TRUNNELL**

Comment: WE OBJECT TO THE US ARMY PROPOSED BAN ON THE USE OF AIRBOATS, FOUR-WHEELERS AND OTHER OFF ROAD VEHICLES IN THE TANANA FLATS.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**1-Aug-01**  
**Charles E. Nelson**

Comment: I am opposed to the new post commander's idea of banning our means of hunting, for this has never hurt anyone. We have never harmed the environment with our

airboats and think that this is perposterous! Please consider how many people you will be affecting by this! Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6 and 8.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Daniel L. Simants**

Comment: Each year, more access restrictions are placed on recreational hunters who have for years, utilized an ORV for accessing hunting areas. I have for numerous years utilized an ORV to access the Tanana Flats for the purpose of camping, fishing and hunting with my family. Each time I have traveled into the Tanana Flats, "off duty" military personnel and civilians alike are encountered utilizing these same areas. In consideration of the strong population of sustainable wildlife in the Tanana Flats, A ban on ORV access would critically affect the management practices of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game within this area. Scientific and biological data has proven that the harvesting of game animals is the most effective means of controlling wildlife populations. Do you have any idea what will likely occur to the wildlife population if you ban ORV access to the Tanana Flats? The overwhelming odds are, wildlife overpopulation will occur, inducing starvation and disease. The Department of Natural Resources on Fort Wainwright has yet to provide the public any possible future benefits expected through implementing this ORV ban to the public. It is my opinion, whether prejudicial or political, your proposal to ban ORV use to civilian and military personnel in the Tanana Flats is unwarranted. For the record, I strongly oppose your proposal to ban (restrict) the use of ORV vehicles in the Tanana Flats. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 5.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Douglas Hubbartt**

Comment: This is in response to the proposed closure, I have been hunting in the flats for several years, raising my children to do the same. It has been nice to hunt and fish without doing the "road hunting method". Closing this will impact not only me but several generations to come. I would like to hear the whole story on why you think that closing this area is benifecial. I am totally against it. Thank you for your time.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Emma Lee & Joe Grennan**

Comment: We sent comments on the draft INRMP for Fort Wainwright via e-mail last week. Again, we have reviewed the draft INRMP for Fort Wainwright for 2002-2006. The change to no airboat or ORV use in the Tanana Flat was clearly HIDDEN in the document. We saw the change as only noticeable in Figure 6-1a., ONE map of the area in the draft document. We feel the public was not legally and fairly notified of the proposed change in the press or in the draft plan. We feel that the Army is not being straight with the public sector that uses the resources of the Tanana Flats. The Army does not even use this area of the Tanana Flats for their training mission. We continue to STRONGLY

DISAGREE with this change to no use of airboats and ORVs in the Tanana Flats and feel that the Army needs to extend the comment period and notify the public adequately so they may comment on this proposed change. We continue to express our opinion that the CURRENT MANAGEMENT / NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE be put in place and that the proposed draft INRMP for Fort Wainwright not be implemented. Airboat and ORV use is the traditional and customary means of access to the area and needs to continue so that the public can hunt and fish the area to feed our families as we have done for decades. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 8, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Emma Lee Grennan**

Comment: What's going on? The Tanana Flats conservation web page is not accessible today. Does this have anything to do with the newspaper article in today's Fairbanks paper or the fact that puble comments are due today?

*Response: Information provided*

**1-Aug-01**

**Erich Hoffman**

Comment: Just big government walking rough shod over personal [?]. No justification as to why. The healthiest moose herd in the state made healthier by GEVA. If we can't go by these means; you can't go. I guess 26 years in uniform fighting for our freedom was for nothing. To say the least this [?] is about [?]. If you haven't already figured it out I am definitely against this idea. And to think our own US military would try to sneak this thru hidden in a 200 page report is criminal.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Garry Hutchison**

Comment: Please allow this e-mail to be my very strong objection to proposed plans by the military to prohibit access, by 4 wheelers and airboats, to areas that have long been used as hunting and trapping grounds by the Fairbanks community, both military and civilian populations alike. This is an outrageous proposal and shows a lack of understanding by the military of the importance of this area to this community. I strongly urge removal of this from the military's land use plan for this area. This land area has been used cooperatively by the military and civilian populations for over 50 years, and your proposal is a direct assault on basic and traditional rights our community have to these subsistence lands. It is important that the civilian and military continue to have a cooperative relationship, as we have had in the past, however, you must know that there are certain rights this community will not allow to be abrogated, and access to this area is one of them. I currently am an elected member of the Assembly of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and will actively represent the interests of our community on this issue, at that level. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Gerald A. Boynton.**

Comment: I would like to voice my opposition to the closure of the tanana flats to off road and air boat traffic. I have used an air boat the last several years to gain access to this hunting and recreation area, by limiting this area it will overpopulate and thus decrease the game. It also will put undo pressure on other areas by having more people use their vehicles to get to the game. If the vehicles are causing destruction to the area maybe a limit as to where they can be used instead of an all out ban would be better. That way we could still use this area for recreation and hunting. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 7.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Helen V. Arnold**

Comment: I wish to lodge my dissenting voice to your proposal to close the Tanana Flats to ORV travel. You may have 'published' this in the paper and 'opened' it up for comment, but you were certainly extremely quiet, and even sneaky, in how you did it. There is no reason for you to take the action you plan. And, it is terribly unfair to the citizens of the Interior of Alaska. NO, I DO NOT want to see you close the flats. PLEASE reconsider and leave it open to the rest of us. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 8, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Jared L. Arnold**

Comment: Closing the flats is outrageous. There is no existing reason that has enough weight to justify this action. It is time to remember who ultimately pays your checks and save your power trips for your off the clock time. One very ticked off citizen.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Jeff Johnson**

Comment: Please find enclosed a copy of correspondence regarding the Army's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the years 2002-2006, as well as the following: First priority for the Tanana flats use plan should include the shared use by the military and civilian population which includes the use of airboats and 4-wheelers. In addition the military should be required to have an annual cleanup of exploded and unexploded ordinance prior to reuse of bombing ranges by the military the following year. In addition to commenting I would also like to receive a copy of your mailing list. Thank you

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to response 9.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Jeff Johnson**

Comment: Senator Ted Stevens, Senator Murkowski, 101 12th Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99701, Gentlemen: I am writing in response to the August 1, 2001 Newsminer article by Tim Mowry. The issue represents our government, and directly the defense department, at its worst. The army has an "Integrated

Natural Resources Management Plan" and a mailing list to go along with that plan. I am on that mailing list. I believe your office, should research who else is on that list. The list contains people who are users of the flats. Please determine how many folks on the mailing list are from the Fairbanks area and are also users, hunters and fisherman. When you get those answers ask why were those folks, who choose to be on a government mailing list, not informed of the intent of the Army to ban the use of airboats and 4-wheelers. Should we assume the banning of snow machines and civilian footprints will be next? The reason I chose to be on the list was to be informed! I answered a questioner where I indicated continued hunting use should be incorporated into a final plan. The process of "informing" folks on the mailing list that everything is continuing on track and the full story is available in fine print is crap. If Deb Lipyanic and her supervisor's job description's include providing useful information, then they have failed. Their lack of frank communication of facts that those on the mailing list would like to be informed of is fraud!!! The intent of the Army appears to be just another government land grab. The government of the Philippines showed the Air Force how to share with the big boot. The navy is losing its bombing range in the Caribbean. It appears the Department of Defense is not listening. The use of land in interior Alaska by our Department of Defense needs to be revisited. First priority should be those who call Fairbanks home. In addition, consideration needs to be given to mandating the annual cleanup of exploded and unexploded ordinance prior to reuse of the bombing ranges by the military the following year. The army is important to our nation's defense and contributes greatly to our community in economic and more importantly as a funnel for bringing more good neighbors to the interior. Although "pork" is good, moose does not cause as much heartburn. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, and 5.*

**1-Aug-01**

**Joe Losinski**

Comment: Attached is my NEGATIVE response to the Army's proposal to ban off-road vehicles (to include airboats) from the use of the Tanana Flats. I hereby am expressing my sincerest dissatisfaction and displeasure in the Army's proposal to close the Tanana Flats to off-road vehicle travel (to include airboats). The years of usage by me and the four members of my family have sustained and cultivated my family's need for food, pleasure, and family bonding through hunting, fishing, and otherwise enjoying the Tanana Flats with the aforementioned vehicles the Army proposes to ban. No reasons are being provided to substantiate the proposal and no negative evidence or impact is offered as well. Furthermore, no outside consultation or notification has been offered to any office of the State of Alaska Dept of Fish & Game nor any other government agency within the State of Alaska. Your usage of the lands is offeratory NOT mandatory and deserves better respect of all peoples within the State of Alaska and NOT just the Dept Of Army. The Tanana Flats land is valuable land to all people of the State of Alaska and more importantly to those within the Fairbanks Management area. All efforts to place a ban of off-road vehicle use (to include airboats) must cease and desist. The people and institutions which have customarily utilized the land will negatively impact our ways of life. Furthermore, the

efforts claimed to advertise the proposal through the people registered last year to utilize the land WAS NOT MET IN ITS ENTIRETY. As a member of the US Air Force, assigned to Eielson AFB, and registered to utilize military lands for hunting and fishing (to include Fort Wainwright), I was not notified in any method regarding the proposed ban as was stated in the Fairbanks Daily News, Wed, Aug 1, 2001. Again, this letter serves to provide my negative opinion of the Army's proposal and should be considered. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
JOHN COGHILL**

Comment: The article about the U.S. Army plan to ban the use of airboats, four-wheelers and other off-road vehicles in the Tanana Flats has produced eleven phone calls from constituents of Representative Coghill today. These calls are from people who are opposed to the Army further restricting Alaskans access to public lands in Alaska. As the population of Alaska increases the access to public lands for traditional uses decreases. Such a move by the Army will devastate hunters and fisherman that have traditionally used the Tanana Flats to hunt and fish. Please take into consideration the fact that this policy was not discussed with any of the organizations or agencies in the public sector or at the state or local government level. I would like to suggest you extend the public comment period and allow people time to submit public comment. Thank you for your consideration.

*Response: Please refer to response 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
John Fritz**

Comment: I find your attempts to slide one by the people to be very unprofessional. I don't know the reason why you want to close the Tanana Flats however, I think it would be in your best interest and the interest of the rest of the community to explain your actions. I am formally voicing my negative opinion to block all access to the Tanana Flats area. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
John W. Kalmbacher**

Comment: I am a member of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Advisory Committee of Fairbanks; at a meeting of that committee in the spring of this year a member of the environmental office gave a briefing on the USARAK Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan. At that time the representative stated that there would be no change in the army policy from previous plans. The committee was in agreement with all aspects of the previous plan. Now at this late time in the comment period of the new plan, I find that this is not the case and that major changes are being proposed. This portion of land is an important hunting opportunity for the people of Fairbanks. It's closure will be a severe blow to the community and will undoubtedly result in hard feelings between the U.S. Army and the Fairbanks community. Since the previous plan was put in force an environmental impact study addressing airboat use in the Tanana flats has been completed. No negative impact was found. In the past the army has had a problem with trespass

cabins on the Tanana flats. I believe that you are addressing this problem by denying access to the public. This is a separate issue in and of itself. Hunting opportunity should not be curtailed as a way of dealing with the illegal actions of a few individuals. I am adamantly opposed to the closure of the Tanana flats to all off-road vehicles and airboats. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 8.*

**1-Aug-01  
Johnston Guy W**

Comment: Saw the News Miner article this morning on the Army's proposal to close the Tanana Flats to offroad vehicles and airboats, first anybody's heard of it around here..and today just happens to be the close on public comment? I would definitely like to comment and I can confidently say that my opinion is representative of many. The sportsmen, hunters, fishermen and recreational users, residents of this area like myself who have made our lives here, have always supported the Army and Air Force alike on land use issues in the past, as well as civil issues. This proposal however is a slap in the face to those people who have used these lands traditionally for many years to put food on the table and for recreation in the few short months of summer. I don't suppose that there was any consideration given that this would also have an extremely negative impact on Game Management in such a large area that several Game units and subunits would be adversely affected. Is there any specific or significant reason for this closure? Or has the Army in Alaska sold out to Tourism, environmentalists like our Governor, at the expense of the people who make their lives here, and who have supported you for so many years.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 7.*

**1-Aug-01  
Ken Armstrong**

Comment: I do not wish to have the Tanana Flats closed to motor vehicles. I oppose this.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**1-Aug-01  
Kenneth V. Conner**

Comment: I have been a recreational user moose hunting in the Tanana Flats for over 10 years. It is the finest moose hunting area I know of. I have taken a moose from this area southeast of Blair Lakes nearly every year. I have used a 4 wheeler atv and an 8 wheel atv to get into this area. In the years I have hunted this area I have never seen any army personnel except hunters. As far as I have been able to determine the army does not use this area at any time. I am not aware of any safety issue involved with this area. The atvs do not affect the environment in this area to any degree. I am nearly 65 years of age and I was advised by my doctor in 1992 not to over exert myself physically due to a minor heart attack at that time. I cannot back pack a moose. I must use an atv to get my harvested moose out of the area that I hunt. My wife will be retiring in a couple of years and our budget will be more dependant upon harvesting a moose annually. You have sent me two questionnaires. I completed



and mailed the first one back to Ft. Wainwright. The second questionnaire was not completed as I did not feel that it was important because the first was complied with. I don't feel this was fair. Why did you send me a second questionnaire? If the Tanana Flats are restricted as proposed, this will add an additional burden upon other areas affecting the balance of hunting pressure. Also, I have had a permit every year I have hunted military lands. I currently have a permit for 2001 and have completed a hunter education course as the army has requested to hunt on military lands. Thank you for your consideration.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 5 and 6.*

**8/1/2001  
Lambert's**

Comment: I strongly oppose the closure of the Tanana Flats area to recreational engine use. For many years I have enjoyed 4 wheeling and air boating in the area. It's closure would highly impact recreational opportunities for the residents of the interior.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**1-Aug-01  
Mark Backes**

Comment: I wish to register my objections to the proposed ORV restrictions in the Tanana Flats. As a user of the Flats for the past 15 years I can say that very little environmental damage by airboats has occurred in that time. This area is one of the last available to airboaters for recreation and hunting. As an airboat user I do my best to pack out my garbage, be respectful of other recreational users, and of private property in the area. I obtain and use the very best mufflers I can on my airboat and am constantly aware of my prop wash. I have yet to see in your proposals any reasoning given to warrant closing the flats. I resent this apparent steamrolling of ORV users in this area and the backhanded way which the Army is handling this matter. There has been no public forum to discuss the reasons for the closure and no chance for feedback by those affected. In summary, I feel that my rights are being violated by the US Army and the uncaring bureaucracy of this country. I will be contacting Senators Stevens and Murkowski and Congressman Don Young concerning this matter. I will be further supporting the Alaska Interior Air Boaters Association in their efforts to stop this injustice. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 8, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Mike Milke**

Comment: My name is Mike Milke, email address [m-dmilke@mosquiconet.com](mailto:m-dmilke@mosquiconet.com) <<mailto:m-dmilke@mosquiconet.com>> I would like to make public comment on the closing of the Tanana Flats. First of all, I don't see why the military thinks they need to close the flats to ORVs. I have not been informed by the military of such closure, and I have been a registered hunter to hunt in the flats for as long as the military has required the registrations. I also have not been able to access the military's web site to learn what their plans are. Some reasons I am against this are that I have been airboating over there for nineteen years, it will cause an increased flow of boat and snow machine

traffic on the Chena, and also closes down yet another area to hunters. I will do everything in my power to keep the flats open which will include writing letters to the editor to make the public of Fairbanks aware of the increased noise the Chena river property owners will endure, I will write my state senators, I will try to stage protest rallies, and I will financially support any user groups trying to file a law suit. Thank You.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Name Illegible**

Comment: 1.) I oppose the ban on use of the Tanana Flats, a prime recreation area. We need to keep the area open for public enjoyment and hunting and fishing. 2.) I request an extension of time to file input on this as the public was unaware of the dead line on public comment until this morning when it was in the Fairbanks paper.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Philip Cranberry**

Comment: Please Do Not Close Tanana Flats to airboats or any other ORV. Please extend the comment period. If the planned closing was not general knowledge among those whom it would affect then it is incorrect to assume that these users do not object. The Army should be aware that their presence depends on their being a good neighbor. Denying access to others is not a method that promotes the communities willingness to accept the Army's presence and use of large tracts of Alaska's land and air space. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Robert N. Workman**

Comment: I've been hunting in the Tanana Flats for almost 30 years for moose. I use an ARGO to get to my hunting spot. I don't understand the reason for closing it to off road vehicles. They certainly don't hurt the terrain. I think it will mess up game management, this is a dumb idea for all concerned.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 7, and 8.*

**1-Aug-01  
Robert Wells**

Comment: In reference to the proposal of closing the Tanana Flats area: NO! NO! NO! DO NOT CLOSE THIS AREA!!!! I am totally against this proposal of closing the Tanana Flats. Yes, I am an airboat owner and am very disgruntled to hear about the military wanting close this area. Yes, the Tanana Flats are very important to me and my family. I am a 20 year resident and very proud to live in Alaska and I am a 100% behind supporting the military in our community and expect the same from them. They DO NOT use this area of the flats so why are we bothering anyone. This area can only be accessed by an airboat and is one of the few areas left to access and enjoy. We have followed the military restrictions

and regulatilons while hunting out there. We do what they ask and appreciate and respect that there is such a area to take our boat. Why, Why, Why are you listening to people that have no idea of what an airboat is all about or what the Tanana Flats have to offer. Have you been on a airboat out to the Tanana Flats? Have you seen what wild life and swamp area has to offer? You wouldn't believe what we see and enjoy out there. It's beautiful! I feel that it is really unfair that this issue has not been publicized as well as it should have been. I have not had the opportunity to review the INRMPS and EAs and request more time in doing so. The army's mission is to maintain local community needs and therefore not allowing airboats into the swamps will push airboats into the area rivers to compete with other riverboats which in turn will effect more than just the concerned airboaters. Closing the Tanana Flats to airboats contradicts what the Fish and Game advisory committee has stated about the over population of moose in this area in which they have had to opened up cow hunts to offset the eco system. And with the recent fires the moose habitat should create an abundance of moose and will need to be maintained by legal hunting methods. The airboaters in the Tanana Flats area have always respected the land by hunting by the rules and complying with the military regulations. Most people do not have the understanding of what the proposal means and therefore requires more consideration and awareness. Please allow more time for review by the public to get a true reaction to the proposal. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Roger Kennedy**

Comment: Please do not block access to the Tanana Flats area. This is the first time I heard of the proposal and I read the News Miner fairly regularly. Since this is the last day for public comment I will have to rely on this short email to you to be counted as a comment against blocking vehicle access to some of the best hunting areas in Alaska. Like they say "Alaska is the last frontier" and that is slowly dwindling! Thanks in advance for reconsidering this proposal.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Russ Benzel**

Comment: Closing down the flats is just wrong. They are a source of recreation, hunting, fishing, and I believe we as Alaskans have the right to enjoy these resources. They've been being used by us before the Army reservation was established and I just doesn't make good sense to restrict access to us Alaskans who use and enjoy that area. 4 wheelers and airboats etc. have no impact on the area as the swamp reclaims everything anyway. I oppose your restrictions.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, and 8.*

**1-Aug-01  
Scott D. Selk**

Comment: I would like to let it be known that to block access to or through the Tanana Flats for ORVs would have a very large negative effect on peoples ability to access valuable

land. I have numerous friends that I am unable to get in contact with because of short notice having only found out about this comment ability today. They need access through or to the tanana flats to be able to get to their partials located in the flats, or in the foot hills of the Alaska Range.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**1-Aug-01  
Scott Shaver**

Comment: This letter is in regards to the proposed closure of off-road vehicle use within the Tanana Flats. As an avid sportsman AND environmentalist, I can clearly see why such action is being taken to close the afore mentioned area to off-road vehicle use. Anyone that has hunted or visited the area in past years, (particularly the common area access points, i.e., river ports, highway access, etc.), couldn't help but notice the huge amounts of congested traffic and tell-tell signs of literally hundreds of hunters heading off, unrestricted, into the Flats on all types and modes of transportation. The damage to the surrounding vegetation in these areas is obvious, even to the novice outdoorsman. From a personal standpoint, I find it hard to believe that one couldn't imagine some sort of transportation restrictions looming on the horizon. On the flip side, many hunters, myself included, appreciate what the prior transportation regulations offered our families and friends. Access to areas relatively untouched by the encroaching societal footprint. To show your child the beauty of a true Alaskan wilderness. To teach them to protect, preserve, and become pro-active stewards of the land they've been given to experience. Undoubtedly, the Flats is THE premier moose hunting area in the nation, with statistically high and healthy moose populations. Attributed to only responsible and accurate wildlife management practices, from the State level, all the way down to the hunter, hiker, and explorer. Me personally, for what it's worth, I believe a "tighter" control of the area pertaining to vehicle use should be established and enforced, as opposed to completely eliminating traffic all together. Perhaps a limited draw, with permits to be openly displayed? And to those folks that have written to you harping about how the game management would be negatively affected. I believe they are citing reasons in their best interest, not in the interest of the game they are apparently concerned about. I hope that those that chose to respond are doing so in a cordial and respectful manner. To those that don't, those of us that still believe in and practice "fair chase" and ethical hunting apologize on their behalf. Good luck to you and your office with the ensuing issues that are sure to arise. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**1-Aug-01  
Sra Rebecca Jones**

Comment: I have been a fifteen year resident of the Fairbanks North Star Borough and my family and I have utilized hunting and fishing in the Tanana Flats. I believe that closing this area to ORVs is preposterous and unfair. This is an area highly valuable to hunters and fisherman and the only way of getting to some areas of the Tanana Flats is by a four-wheeler or an air-boat. The Army has been completely unfair in the fact, not to mention inhumane to not even give the public any kind of notice of such an important issue. Families such as Native Alaskans in our area may go hungry who use this area to hunt and fish via ORV. For the Army

to use the environment is as a vague excuse the people in Alaska are not going to buy that, the Army will be the ones disrupting the food-chain by making innocent people starve. I am outraged by the actions the Army took on this issue and I believe the Army should extend the date on public comments and really listen to the people in this area who they will truly be affecting. We pay taxes to the government therefore the land belongs to everyone and we should all have a voice in this matter.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 6, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
STEVE VINCENT**

Comment: ATTACHED IS A COPY OF A LETTER E-MAILED TO TIM MOWRY JULY 20, 2001. MY POSITION IS AGAINST THESE PROPOSED RESTRICTIONS, AND THE " BACKDOOR " METHOD IN WHICH THEY ARE ATTEMPTING TO BE IMPOSED. HI TIM, THIS E-MAIL WAS SENT TO ME JULY 19, 2001. ON THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE OF THE MAP ARE THE ORV RESTRICTIONS, WHICH RESTRICT AIRBOATS FROM THE TANANA FLATS. INTERESTINGLY, THE MILITARY IS ALLOWING THEIR USE ON THE TANANA, AND WOOD RIVERS, NAVIGABLE WATERWAYS OVER WHICH THEY HAVE NO LEGAL CONTROL, BUT FEEL THEY DO. I HAVE CALLED SEVERAL LOCATIONS ON FT. WAINWRIGHT INCLUDING THE PROVOST MARSHAL'S OFFICE, WHICH HAS IN THE PAST ISSUED THE HTF PERMITS, SO FAR NO ONE IS CLAIMING KNOWLEDGE OF THIS UPDATE. THE RUMOR MILL PUTS AN EFFECTIVE DATE OF AUGUST 1, 2001, THOUGH I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM IT. THIS ORDER IS BOUND TO STIR UP THE HORNETS NEST ON SEVERAL LEVELS. 1) AIRBOATS HAVE HUNTED THIS AREA FOR OVER 30 YRS., ESTABLISHING SEVERAL ROUTES THAT COULD BE CONSTRUED AS TRAILS IN A LEGAL SENSE. 2) THE AREA IN QUESTION IS NOT USED FOR MANEUVERS AS IT IS IN THE FLIGHT PATH FOR FAIRBANKS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, AND PARTIALLY GOING TO BE USED BY GVEA FOR A POWER LINE EASEMENT. 3) IN 1997 OR 1998 MP'S PATROLLING THE FLATS, BY AIRBOAT, SQUIRED AROUND A BOTANIST SENT FROM WASHINGTON, DC. ACCORDING TO THE MP'S STORY HE WAS UNABLE TO FIND ANY SIGNIFICANT PERMANENT DAMAGE DONE TO THE TANANA FLATS BY AIRBOATS. THOUGH THEY DID FIND A PIKE OR TWO IN SOME OF THE LARGER PONDS. 4) IF DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT IS TRULY THE ISSUE, WHY HASN'T THE MILITARY TAKEN MAJOR STEPS TO CLEAN UP THE AREA EAST OF CLEAR CREEK? A SHORT FLIGHT OVER THIS AREA WOULD MAKE A HARDENED INDUSTRIALIST SICK AT THE SIGHT OF ALL THE RUSTING CARNAGE, LEAKING OIL (OR GOD KNOWS WHAT) DRUMS, AND SCARS MADE BY HEAVY EQUIPMENT DURING MILITARY TRAINING. 5) MOOSE POPULATIONS IN THE TANANA FLATS ARE AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS ON RECORD. MANY FAIRBANKSONS RELY ON THIS AREA TO PUT FOOD ON THE FAMILY TABLE, SOME OUT OF NEED, OTHERS WHO PREFER TO EAT GAME MEAT OVER BEEF. 6) FOR DISABLED FAIRBANKSONS

HUNTING IN THE FLATS BY AIRBOAT IS ONE OF THE FEW WAYS TO GET DEEP INTO THE FIELD TO MOOSE HUNT. MIKE SALZMAN WOULD BE A GOOD CONTACT ABOUT THIS, AS HE RECENTLY SPENT OVER \$40K FOR AN AIRBOAT MODIFIED FOR HAND OPERATION ONLY. THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN HIS FIRST HUNTING SEASON IN THE NEW BOAT. 7) FOR SOME, LIKE MYSELF, TIME IS AN ISSUE. THE ABILITY TO HUNT THE FLATS IN THE EVENINGS AND SUNDAYS ALLOWS ME TO FILL MY FREEZER, WHILE REMAINING EMPLOYED. I ALSO PROXY HUNT FOR ELDER ALASKANS, AND TAKE OLDER ALASKANS HUNTING THAT HAVE A NEED TO BE WITHIN A REASONABLE PROXIMITY TO MEDICAL SERVICES. THE TANANA FLATS FIT THE BILL PERFECTLY. 8) SINCE AIRBOATS HAVE BEEN HUNTING THE FLATS FOR OVER 30 YEARS, SINCE THE MILITARY, BY NEGOTIATION, DOESN'T HAVE TO WAIT THE MANDATORY YEAR PRIOR TO HUNTING IN THIS STATE, SINCE THE BIG DRAW TO ALASKA FOR THE MILITARY IS HUNTING AND FISHING, IT WAS ASSUMED BY MOST OF THE AIRBOAT OWNERS THAT THE FLATS WERE SACRED GROUND FOR US. 9) MOST AIRBOAT OWNERS ARE SICK TO DEATH OF HEARING ABOUT NOISE ISSUES, MANY HAVE SPENT THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ON DIFFERENT PROPS, REDUCTION UNITS, AND MUFFLERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO REDUCE THE NOISE. UNLIKE PROP OR JET DRIVEN BOATS, AIRBOATS DO NOT SUCK SALMON EGGS OFF THE BOTTOM OF SHALLOW CREEKS, SHRED SALMON FRY, GRAYLING, AND TROUT IN THE PROPS OR IMPELLERS, INJECT EXHAUST INTO THE RIVERS, SCAR SHALLOW CREEK BEDS, OR CUT UP SPAWNING SALMON. THEY DO MAKE NOISE THOUGH, AND WHAT BETTER PLACE TO MAKE THAT NOISE THAN IN THE APPROACH PATH OF AN AIRPORT? 10) ONE MORE POINT, AND THEN YOUR EYES CAN REST. IN THE SPRING FOLLOWING A HEAVY HUNTING SEASON ONE CAN HARDLY TELL WERE THE AIRBOATS TRAVELED THAT FALL IN THE FLATS. WALK UP AND DOWN A HILL 30 TIMES A DAY FOR 25 DAYS, AND THAT TRAIL WILL BE EVIDENT FOR YEARS AND YEARS. I HOPE YOU HAVE TIME TO RESEARCH THIS, AND THE DESIRE. THANKS FOR YOUR TIME. BEST REGARDS.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Steve Springer**

Comment: I am writing to express my views concerning the Army's decision to disallow airboats and ATVs in the Tanana Flats region of Fort Wainwright. I believe this is the proper approach. The Tanana Flats has fragile wetlands that are important to preserve. With the advent of a new power line right of way, the Army should disallow the use of ATVs before this right of way becomes a new access for these wetland destroying machines do more harm than they have already. Further, it is of my opinion that the Army should consider reclamation of those areas that have been disturbed by airboats and ATVs in the past. I applaud your efforts to help protect this fragile ecosystem by banning the use of ATVs and airboats. Thank you for your time.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**1-Aug-01  
STEVE VINCENT**

Comment: HI TIM, AFTER READING YOUR ARTICLE TODAY I CALLED 9 PEOPLE THAT I KNOW WERE ISSUED HTF PERMITS IN 2000. NOT ONE COULD RECALL RECEIVING AN ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE NEWS LETTER THIS YEAR.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to response 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Ted Leonard**

Comment: 1. I oppose the ban on use of the Tanana Flats, a prime recreation area across the river from Fairbanks and North Pole, by the citizens of this area. We need to keep this area open for public enjoyment and hunting and fishing. 2. Most of us were not aware of this ban, buried in a 200 page volume, until today, the last day of the public comment period. The public comment period should be extended for thirty days, to avoid disenfranchising the residents. 3. The Army has no business encroaching on prime recreation land on the fringe of town. It may be time to revoke the Army's use permit for this area, since they are unwilling to engage in responsible shared use.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 6, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Todd Redinius**

Comment: I would like to see the Tanana flats to stay open to all access. There seems to be a trend to close federal lands. This will only put more pressure on other areas and give a negative opinion of Ft. Wainwright and the Army. I would like to see a policy of enforcing regulations than of closing the area altogether. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, and 3.*

**1-Aug-01  
W.Bruce Gard**

Comment: I want to let you know that I fully support your plan to close the Tanana Flats to air boats . I have been hunting in the area for years and have been dismayed by the increasing numbers of motorized vehicles that have invaded this area. It is to the point where the noise from the airboats is nonstop day and night, and the impact on other non- airboating hunters is the loss of a peaceful and enjoyable week out in the field trying to find meat for the table. I see it as the rights of the few impacting and degrading the experience of the many. And I haven't even touched on the concept of "fair chase" in hunting. I have had these guys come flying across an area I have been quietly stalking a moose and motor right up to the animal, cut the engine, and blast the moose at point-blank range. IS THIS HUNTING?? Just because these guys spent upwards of thirty thousand for their rig should not give them the right to use it. Because they do have that kind of money to throw around probably means that they are from the higher income brackets, and thus have more political clout than the majority of hunters who find these airboats repulsive. These machines are onnoxiuously

noisy, and the people who use them are not respecting the rights of others to have a quality hunting experience. I fully support your proposal to ban these rigs from the Tanana flats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8/1/2001  
Wade Kane**

Comment: I am definitely opposed to any limiting of access by people using any sort of motorized vehicle to the Tanana Flats training area.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**1-Aug-01  
William Scott Lammers**

Comment: This is the first I have heard of this Closure. I'm not in favor of restricting this area any more. Please allow this E-mail as my comment NOT supporting this proposal. I would also like enough time to comment on this proposal in person, with enough time to organize my comments, please extend the comments period.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**1-Aug-01  
Xandi Hackett**

Comment: I understand this is the email address people send comments to regarding the possible ban on rvs in the tanana flats. I am a reporter with Channel 11 and I am looking to talk to someone with Fort Wainwright about this. If you could let me know who that is and how i can contact I would greatly appreciate it. Thanks,

*Response: Information provided*

**2-Aug-01  
Carl Rosier**

Comment: Attached is a letter from the Alaska Outdoor Council requesting an extension to the public comment deadline for the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan. It has been brought to our recent attention that the Plan calls for significant changes in public access for BLM lands leased by the Army, namely the Tanana Flats, and that the public has been caught largely unaware of those changes. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to hearing from you soon. Sincerely, Jesse VanderZanden, Executive Director, Alaska Outdoor Council. On behalf of over 10,000 members and 40 member clubs, I am writing to express our concern over proposed access restrictions in the Tanana Flats and request that the United States Army, Fort Wainwright, extend the public comment period for the Army's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan. The proposed restrictions for public access on Bureau of Land Management lands leased by the military, namely the "Tanana Flats", regarding off road vehicles and airboats, appears to have only come to the attention of the public as recently as yesterday - the same day as the public comment deadline. I echo the sentiments of dozens of members who contacted us that the first they had heard about this proposal was either in yesterday's newspaper or on the late news. Also, in talking with local and statewide access groups and the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory



Committee, it appears they were also unaware of these changes. Given the significant proposed changes in the Plan, it is imperative that the comment deadline be extended to address their and our concerns and hundreds of other outdoor users. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I look forward to hearing from you soon. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**2-Aug-01  
Cliff Judkins**

Comment: I was taken by surprise today to learn of the Army's action to close the Tanana Flats to Airboats and off road vehicles. I am the President of the Alaska Boating Association and Vice Chair of the local Fish and Game Advisory Committee and thus am continually involved in access issues thought Alaska. Today's news article was the first that I have heard of this issue. I am writing to protest the closure action and to ask that the comment period be extended. The area in question is used by hundreds of Alaskan air boaters for hunting, fishing, trapping and general recreation. Airboats are the only reasonable means of access to most of this area. Airboats are mentioned as a means of transportation, freight and access in interior Alaska as early as 1920, ("Blazing Alaska's Trails" Dr. Alfred Hulse Brooks, 1914-1922. "In the shallow rivers air propellers have been successfully used. Nearly every Yukon Indian now has some sort of gas boat to visit his fish wheels and to travel from place to place." Airboats are an established customary and traditional use of this area; they are presently the predominant use of the area; they do , minimal if any environmental damage; they are virtually the only method of accessing fast acres of this V area. This area has a high density of moose due to lack of access. There is absolutely no justification for closing the Tanana Flats to airboats. I urge you to extend the comment period and take a second look at this action.

*Response: Please refer to response 10.*

**2-Aug-01  
Cliff Judkins**

Comment: As the President of the Alaska Boating Association and speaking in behalf of thousands of Alaskan boaters, hunters and fishermen I protest the recent action by the United States Army to close the Tanana Flats to off road vehicles and airboats and request that the comment period be extended. Even though I am continually involved in Alaskan motorized access issues; I was made aware of this issue only today!! Airboats are a customary and traditional means of transportation in interior Alaska and are sighted in Alaskan History literature as far back as 80 years ago when they were employed by minors, trappers and others for access to and transportation through swampy and shallow areas. They were referred to as "air propeller" driven boats. Airboats are environmentally friendly leaving very little and in many cases no evidence of their passage. This area is used today by hundreds of Alaskans using airboats to gather winter meat supply and for general outdoor recreation. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, 8, and 10.*

**2-Aug-01  
Dave McGuire**

Comment: I would like to express my admiration and appreciation for your proposal to ban ATVs and airboats on military property in the Tanana Flats. Despite what power vehicle users would believe, the Tanana Flats is a fragile and slow-healing ecosystem. With the new power line there will be considerably more access leading to far greater impacts unless certain restrictions aren't applied and enforced. I am sure you will hear from countless outraged ATV and airboat users incensed that their rights are being violated but I urge you to stand firm on your proposed ban. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**2-Aug-01  
Dennis G. Quinn**

Comment: I have been using the military land south of the Tanana River that is being considered to prohibit airboats and 4 wheelers. For 20 years I have depended on moose that I harvest from there. The area is easily accessible from Fairbanks and remains unusable for other uses. If this was closed it would place undue hunting pressure on the rest of the huntable areas. Also, I am sure it would be a source of displeasure with the military. Thank you for this consideration.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**2-Aug-01  
Kevin Hite**

Comment: Let me introduce myself. My name is Kevin Hite and I am currently the President of the Alaska State Snowmobile Association. I have enclosed a letter formally requesting the extension of the comment period for the Resource Plan. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call. On behalf of over 1,600 members, 25 member clubs and 45 business members, I am writing to express our concern over proposed access restrictions in the Tanana Flats and request that the United States Army, Fort Wainwright, extend the public comment period for the Army's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan. The restrictions proposed in the news release concerning public access to the Tanana Flats area has caught most, if not all, of our membership by surprise. Although there was some advance notice of the Management Plan being open for revision, no person in our organization was aware that the restrictions to snowmobiles and other ORVs were assimilated into the draft issue. Many of our members called, wrote or e-mailed me last night and today to request action on our part. The news report stating that even the Fairbanks Fish and Game saw no impact in the area from ORVs and the fact that the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Board was not aware of the changes, suggest that there is time and room for reconsideration of the impact of these restrictions on the public. I appreciate the opportunity for continued communication and request on behalf of our user group that the deadline for comments be extended. Be assured that we will use our contact resources to solicit concrete comments statewide that will be of use to your design processes. I can be contacted via E-mail or at (907) 529-0106. Regards.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**2-Aug-01**

**Linda DeFoliar**

Comment: I would like to express my admiration and appreciation for your proposal to ban ATVs and airboats on military property in the Tanana Flats. Despite what power vehicle users would believe, the Tanana Flats is a fragile and slow-healing ecosystem. With the new power line there will be considerably more access leading to far greater impacts unless certain restrictions aren't applied and enforced. I am sure you will hear from countless outraged ATV and airboat users incensed that their rights are being violated but I urge you to stand firm on your proposed ban. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**2-Aug-01**

**MARK R. SLINGERLAND**

Comment: PLEASE RECONSIDER THE CLOSURE OF THE TANANA FLATS AREA, LOTS OF CIVILIANS AS WELL AS MILITARY PEOPLE USE THIS AREA FOR HUNTING, SUPPLYING FOOD FOR THEIR FAMILIES. PLEASE RECONSIDER! THANK YOU.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**2-Aug-01**

**Melvin Grove**

Comment: I would like to comment on the proposed restrictions to ORV use on military land. I read through chapter six of the proposal and believe for one the document is extremely vague on why any restrictions to ORV should be considered. To restrict public access to these areas due to environmental impacts would, in my view, also necessitate restricting military operations for they have as much if not more impact on the environment than the average citizen. Additionally, restricting access to prevent trespassing on restricted areas is also poor reasoning. Areas that are already being trespassed on will continue to be trespassed on by those who currently fail to adhere to the restrictions. Limiting everyone to prevent the few who trespass will only give those trespassers more freedom and access while limiting the law abiding citizen. Thanks for allowing this comment.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**2-Aug-01**

**Richard Clampitt**

Comment: Below is a letter I've prepared for the Alaska Department Fish and Game board. Please read the attachment since it will enhance your understanding of my following comments. Although I applaud your efforts, I don't think your proposal provides the necessary protection for people, animals, or property. Your proposal would cause the airboats to operate in more populated areas increasing the likelihood of having someone accidentally (or purposefully) shot. I've had many close calls with air boaters and the only safe answer is to either ban them from the rivers completely, or allow their use for transportation purposes only. If someone gets shot (accidentally or purposefully) as a result of this new

proposal it would be very unfortunate for all involved. For the safety of all, please consider revising your proposal to either completely eliminate the use of airboats or allow them to be used for transportation purposes only. ADF&G Board of Game, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526. I wanted to take a few moments to address the board concerning an issue that I feel is not only dangerous to the wildlife in Alaska, but also to the people of this fine state. My concern lies with hunting from Airboats. First, I would like to address the danger of hunting from an airboat. Next, I will address the harassment of wildlife by airboats. And finally, I will provide some suggestions to correct this dangerous problem. I will only use two specific examples to make my point. Please realize that these are not the only examples I have nor are they isolated events. Hunting from airboats can be dangerous to hunters in and out of the boat. Recently I was hunting on a slough of the Tanana River. The opening to the slough was no more than 4 feet across and about 6 inches deep so we tied our small inflatable to a log next to the opening. An airboat came by and tried to squeeze into the small opening. As often is the case, they powered their way through the opening by revving the engine on the airboat. Our inflatable was behind the airboat flapping in the prop wash like a kite. A similar situation might entice a strong tempered individual outside of the boat to shoot at the boaters because of their lack of respect for others. In this way (coupled with the danger of carrying loaded weapons at high speeds that are ready to fire) the boaters are in danger. The airboat then came through the slough with three men holding their rifles on their shoulders in the shooting position. These men were prepared to shoot at the first sign of movement, despite good hunting ethics or regulations. I fear that if my partner or I would have moved we would now be a statistic. This kind of activity is dangerous to hunters outside of the boat. In either case a life could be lost because of a situation that should have been prevented. Something must be done to change this dangerous activity. In addition to the danger airboat hunters pose to themselves and to others, they also threaten animals. It is a well known fact that one of the most effective means of hunting with an airboat is the element of surprise. In this case the airboat will scare the animal from its hiding place into the open area so that it can be shot. This means of hunting is not hunting at all, but simple animal harassment that promotes the shooting of illegal animals. (How many illegally taken animals in similar situations do you think get reported by these unethical hunters?) This activity is in direct violation of the hunting regs, No 39, *General Hunting Restrictions (Methods and Means)*, which states "you may not drive, herd, or molest game with any motorized vehicle...." According to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, the definition of molest is "to annoy, disturb, or persecute." Consider the following true story as a perfect example of how airboaters molest animals. This past year my partner and I were at our camp glassing open areas for moose on the Wood River. Multiple airboats would cruise up and down the river at high speeds with their passengers prepared to shoot (once again we were afraid to move for fear of being shot). For one solid week they would cruise up and down the river multiple times each day. One evening there was a cow and two calves that were frightened by the airboats. They ran north through our camp missing our tent by only a few feet. After the airboats passed the moose ran back south, just behind our camp, trying once again to get away from the airboats. This incident clearly shows how moose react to the noise of airboats proving that they should be prevented

from repeatedly buzzing up and down the rivers. As I stated above, I think, and I hope you agree, that airboats repeatedly buzzing up and down the rivers is in violation of the hunting regulations. However, this violation is extremely difficult to enforce and prove. Therefore, I will not leave you without some suggestions on how to fix this problem. Since I have never seen or heard of anyone using their airboat for getting to a camp and then hunting from that location, I feel that the best alternative is to prevent the use of airboats for hunting purposes completely. Realizing that airboaters are organized and will fight the legality of such regulation, I offer a second choice. I suggest that it be identified in the regulation that airboats can be used only for transportation to and from the hunting location (similar to aircraft) and must be equipped with mufflers. Since this law could be easily misinterpreted or broken I also suggest you include a requirement to have the weapons emptied of their ammo and stored in gun cases out of immediate reach when transporting gear to the camp and on the return. Keeping loaded weapons out of the boat and out of reach will make the spirit of the law clear and will prevent the use of airboats for hunting purposes while still allowing their use for transportation. And as a final option I would ask that you redefine the Nenana Controlled Use Area boundary from the west bank of the Wood River to the east bank of the Wood River. Since airboats are not allowed in the Nenana Controlled Use Area this will prevent their use on the Wood River and my family and I can feel a little safer when out on the hunt. In conclusion I have shared two examples (backed up by witnesses if you need them) of why airboats should be illegal to hunt from. Please understand that I'm not opposed to using airboats (with mufflers) for transportation purposes. However, if something doesn't change soon then I'm afraid someone will lose their life through an unfortunate incident. Aircraft buzzing wildlife is considered harassment in accordance with the Administrative Code and airboats repeatedly buzzing up and down rivers should not be any different (especially since most airboats are much more noisy than aircraft). Why do we continue to allow airboats to harass these animals and endanger hunters and animals alike? Can you imagine the public relations nightmare that would occur if this kind of activity was shown to the American public? I encourage you to put a stop to this activity quickly. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**2-Aug-01  
Sandy Kowalski**

Comment: I have read the military Tanana flats preliminary management plan. I oppose the use of 4-wheelers in this area, as well as all other motorized vehicles. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**2-Aug-01  
Stan Justice**

Comment: I know the comment period has closed, but I had not realized the good news in the draft plan. To remove air boats and four wheelers from the flats is an excellent idea. The air boats, even the new "quiet" ones with 4 blades, are very noisy, disturbing wildlife and humans. From the air one can see the maze of air boat trails. Those trails become creeks draining the wetlands. 4 wheelers while relatively quiet do

even more damage to the land. They compress and kill the vegetative cover that insulates the frozen ground. A melt hole forms. The wheelers go around the side. The melt hole gets bigger. The trees lean towards the melt hole. What a mess. People are rapidly losing the ability to walk. The flats had a long history of exploration before the invention of air boats and wheelers. People used to line up the rivers and then walk. Takes a little longer but it works. Take the Wilderness Classic as an example. The on foot racers used to go from Black Rapids to McKinley Village across the foot hills S of the flats. People can get places under their own steam. Ban the air boats and 4 wheelers.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**2-Aug-01  
Steve Coleman**

Comment: I urge you to reconsider the banning of snowmachines, atvs, and airboats from the Tanana Flats area. Closing this area would not only effect those of us who like to ride our atvs, snowmachines or take our airboats out. It would also adversely effect the moose population and those who hunt there, people who have hunted there for years would be forced to seek other hunting areas this could result in over hunting of those areas. Please consider the lifestyle of so many Alaskans and do not close this area.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 7.*

**2-Aug-01  
Vaughan J. Hoefler, D.D.S.**

Comment: I am writing to comment on the proposed Tanana Flats Management Plan. I very strongly oppose the use of any motorized vehicles, including four-wheelers and airboats, during the summer months in the Tanana Flats. Motorized vehicles are responsible for damaging and in some cases deliberately vandalizing natural forestation and ground cover. Again, I would like to repeat my strong support for the preliminary Tanana Flats Management Plan. I can be reached for comment at (907) 452-7955. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**3-Aug-01  
Dr. Dorothy A. Fender**

Comment: I am writing to comment on the proposed Tanana Flats Management Plan. I very strongly oppose the use of any motorized vehicles, including four-wheelers and airboats, during the summer months in the Tanana Flats. Motorized vehicles are responsible; for damaging and in some cases deliberately vandalizing natural forestation and ground cover. Again, I would like to repeat my strong support for the preliminary Tanana Flats Management Plan. I can be reached for comment at (907) 479-8443. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**5-Aug-01  
Jim Teders**

Comment: Army vs. Flats. To the editor: The Army wants to shut the Tanana Flats to hunting by airboats and other off-



road vehicles. Why? It's not an issue of whether you hunt on the Flats, or if you own an airboat, or any other off-road vehicle capable of accessing the flats, it's an issue of what's right and wrong. If the Army would look back on the papers they signed when they took control of the Flats, I think they will find that one of the stipulations was that it would always be open to the public. The Army met with Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Board and never mentioned this ban, knowing how popular it is with the public. They "buried" this ban in 200 plus pages of regulations knowing no one but military personnel would probably read them. They gave an Internet address for public comment but guess what? Nobody can access this site unless you're on an Army computer site. I wonder why there have been fewer than a dozen comments? Deceit and deception is the way they do business. Every time we get a new post commander at Fort Wainwright or a new commanding general at Fort Richardson the same thing happens. It's like a new dog who just moved on the block. The first thing he thinks he has to do is mark every tree just so all the other dogs know that he's the main man (or woman) and he now makes the rules. Maybe they're just making their own exclusive hunting area for their elite. It wouldn't be the first time.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 10.*

**6-Aug-01  
darleen masiak**

Comment: I support a ban on airboats in the Tanana Flats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**6-Aug-01  
David N. Leone**

Comment: Just an FYI. I just came back from the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meeting where Lt. Col. Bruzese (FT. WW Post Commander) stated the public comment period has been reopened till August 31. There seems to be some misunderstanding between what the News-Miner reported and what the Army is proposing. They are proposing restrictions that are environmental and seasonal in nature. Basically, they want to restrict airboats from running across the boggy land but not necessarily restricted from using the rivers. The use of ORVs (outdoor recreational vehicles) such as 4 wheelers and snowmachines would be restricted until the ground froze solid. At least, this is my understanding of Lt. Col. Bruzese's comments.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to response 3.*

**6-Aug-01  
Gerald A. Richards**

Comment: I have been out of town and just returned today. It has come to my attention that the Army is proposing a ban on the use of the Tanana Flats for hunting and fishing. I don't know if the comment period is still open, however I would like to voice my disapproval of this concept. The Tanana Flats has long been a prime recreational area for Fairbanksans, in the summer, the fall and the winter months. Personally, my family uses the area for snowmachining and trapping in the winter months. In the spring and summer we use our airboat to see moose and numerous species of birds. Tourists and family that come to town are awestruck by the beauty of this pristine area so close to Fairbanks. In the fall

we hunt for moose in the area. We have done this for many years. There are many other Fairbanksans that also use this area similar to what we do. Most of the area is unusable for training purposes, except for some of the impact areas. Please reconsider your position and keep this as a joint use area. I would also like to get a copy of the proposal. Could you please fax me back instructions on how to get a copy or an excerpt from the proposed plan?

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, and 6.*

**6-Aug-01  
Lee Johnson**

Comment: As I announced at the June meeting I will not be able to attend the meeting on August 14. I will likely be in Shishmaref or Wales. Many of you may have read recently the story about Fort Wainwright planning to shut down recreational access in the Tanana Flats. This would be a huge loss to Fairbanks. Hundreds of miles of trails and thousands of acres of areas to explore would be off-limits. I would appreciate the commission requesting the public comment period be extended now that their real plans have leaked out. Attached is a letter ASSA sent. Thanks,

*Response: Please refer to general response 10.*

**7-Aug-01  
Bari Hite**

Comment: I find I cannot give adequate comment on this issue without reviewing the proposal. Please send a copy of the proposal to Bari Hite, P O Box 80708, Fairbanks, AK 99708. For the record, vehicle bans to an area that traditionally was used by tens of thousands of area residents is inappropriate and unjust. But I still would like to receive this proposal so that I can learn what all you're proposing to eliminate. Thanks.

*Response: Information provided. Please note there is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**7-Aug-01  
Dean Allen**

Comment: I would like to express my concern about the proposed closure. Land closure seems to be a popular thing with Federal agencies these days. With the National Park Service, EPA, Corp of Engineers, wet lands, Forest service, Native allotments, endangered species and all of the other issues that I have forgotten we the people and owners of the lands affected are being systematically forced off our lands. Now here we are with the Army trying to jump on the bandwagon. I fail to understand what possible harm there can be to lands that the army is not utilizing for activities that would be dangerous, could justify the closure being attempted. I feel that the Military needs to step back from this issue and rethink their position. The Tanana flats have been a traditional hunting and recreational area of the interior residents for as long I have been around, 44 years, and they have suffered little if any as a result of the usage. If the Military wants to alienate the local population closing the flats would be a terrific way to do so. I strongly suggest you reconsider your position. Thank You.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8.*



**7-Aug-01  
Debbie Tilsworth**

Comment: Would you be kind enough to email me a copy of the proposal to restrict civilian access to the Tanana Flats? I'm a member of the Chamber of Commerce board, and at lunch today after Lt. Col. Victoria Bruzese's presentation, we were told that we could get a copy of the proposal at the Fairbanks Legislative Information Office. I stopped there after lunch, but they had not heard of it and had no information. Linda Douglass gave me your email address, so I thought I'd try asking you. If the proposal is in a format that cannot be emailed, would you please mail it.

*Response: Information provided*

**7-Aug-01  
Hamsley, Larry E.**

Comment: I'm not sure how to proceed with my comments. I could threaten, scream or beg if it would persuade the decision. I am adamantly opposed to the decision to ban ATVs in the Tanana Flats area. I have hunted the Bonnefield Trail for years and can tell you that ATVs have not damaged the swamps over there. This is always an annual event that I wait for every year and enjoy so much. Please don't ban the use of these vehicles. I am not an airboater but I'm sure they are as concerned as I. I figure this is being driven by some anti hunter who has nothing else to do but mess with Alaskans. It isn't right. Don't let this happen.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**7-Aug-01  
James V. Kelley**

Comment: I have contacted Senator Murkowski, Senator Stevens and Congressman Young about my disapproval of the proposed ban of ORVs and airboats in the Tanana Flats. This is just another way to lock up more land from public use and there is no foundation for this action. Who were the people that made this decision? There doesn't seem to be anyone standing up and saying "I did it and here are the reasons"! When I talked to Deb Lipyanik the only thing she would say was send us a letter. Does everyone in the chain of command just blindly follow orders, are they afraid to ask questions and why wasn't this Fairbanks headline news when it was first mentioned instead of hiding it in some obscure location in the news paper? I request that the names and positions of persons responsible for this proposed ban be made know. This will enable the people of Fairbanks to make direct contact with them to express their disapproval. Thank you,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**7-Aug-01  
Lance Stevens**

Comment: It is my request that this area remain open for use of airboats, ATVs and off road vehicles. I feel this is an unwarranted closer. Thank you,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**7-Aug-01  
Lori Backes**

Comment: Rep. Whitaker has received a few phone calls from constituents regarding the proposed changes to the management plan for the tanana flats. Would you please send me a copy of the proposed plan? It may not be necessary to send the whole thing if it is voluminous, but he is specifically interested in the portion that affects the public use of the Tanana Flats. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me. Thank you.

*Response: Information provided*

**7-Aug-01  
MSgt Miller**

Comment: I unequivocally support the Army's proposal to ban airboats on the Tanana Flats. I have hunted that area three of the last four years and I'm constantly annoyed by the actions of the airboaters. I worked hard, hiking great distances to get to a hunting spot, only to have an airboater go "screaming" by me. Their actions would produce one of several outcomes. Once it scared the moose away I spent three days working to get. The other had an airboater move in, ride along side the moose, shoot it, put it in the boat and leave. I'm sure these actions are not exhibited by all airboaters. These are just a few examples of the frustrations myself and fellow hunters have been exposed to. If they want a place to hunt with their airboat I know of some great swamp land in Florida. Maybe they'd like to take up gator hunting. I say give these people some "cheese to go with that whine". I'm confident the Army will "do the right thing". Thanks for the opportunity to share my thoughts and views. As a military member I stand beside the Army on this one.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**7-Aug-01  
Peggy Ruonavaara**

Comment: I would appreciate your Not closing the Tanana Flats to "off highway vehicles". The primary sorse of meat in my household is moose and it currently comes from the Tanana flats. Of course we could find somewhere else to hunt but we have been hunting there for 5 years. I have been an Alaska resident for 16 years. The tanana flats is the most economical place for me to hunt, the other places I have been invited to hunt are private property that require a fly in and out that makes it economically unwise to do so when I hunt to feed my family. I know the Army is sensitive to the community needs and desires, as shown by extending the time allowed for public comment, and I thank you for reading my message.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**7-Aug-01  
Robert Flanagan**

Comment: You are doing what should have been done when the airboats 1 st ,started to run on the flats. They should have been stopped then. They can go get a moose the sporting way, let then walk in to get them { that shoul be for all moose hunters} Hell do not back down on what you know is the best for the flats. You have A 100% backing from me , if it means any thing Thank you for try to do the right thing.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8-Aug-01**

**Cathleene E. Alden (Mrs. John N.)**

Comment: I fully support the U.S. Army's proposal to close the Tanana Flats to all vehicular use. I assume this will be closure to military as well as civilian vehicular use. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, and 8.*

**8-Aug-01**

**CHUCK HASKINS**

Comment: I am very much opposed to the idea of stopping air boats and ATVs on the tanana flats. I have been going to Alaska since 1986 moose hunting with friends whom live there and it would make it impossible for me to get anywhere without these vehicles. I usually leave around \$2,500.00 in Alaska on these trips. Please don't deny me the privilege to keep hunting in ALASKA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**8-Aug-01**

**Daniel W. Swift**

Comment: I SUPPORT the proposed ban on the use of airboats on the Tanana Flats. These devices are incredibly noisy. Their owners tend to be inconsiderate of others. They diminish everyone else's enjoyment of the outdoors. Their use needs to be discouraged. You will be doing the majority of people along our waterways a favor by banning the use of those devices for turning gasoline into noise on military land. Thank you for your consideration.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8-Aug-01**

**DAVID WATTS**

Comment: I STRONGLY APOSE THE ARMY'S PLAN TO BAN OFF-ROAD VEHICLES IN THE TANANA FLATS. My family has enjoyed traveling via airboat throughout the flats since 1978. We have explored the creeks, rivers, flats, and islands in and surrounding the flats. In 1979, my brother and I began hunting moose in this area. It is extremely important to understand that we have not hunted any other area in the State since that time. The Tanana Flats have provided our family ( 16 members ), with many pleasures including providing meat for our tables. During the past 23 years while traveling through the Tanana Flats, we have seen only airboats. It is impossible to travel in the Flats via any other method including and especially via walking. I'm sure there are areas in the Flats where four wheelers and riverboats can travel, but there has never been a conflict because these modes of transportation travel in different areas. The use of off road vehicles in the Tanana Flats will be acceptable. This area is where these types of vehicles belong. Once the general population realizes that ifjhere is a ban on these types of vehicles in the Flats, we will be forced to use these same types of vehicles in other areas presently enjoyed by river boats, campers, hikers, canoeist, rafters, bird watchers, etc. We have appreciated the support provided us in the past.

The airboats are not damaging any vegetation, and I have witnessed no garbage or trash being left behind. We do take pride in the Tanana Flats and treat this area with the utmost respect. P. S. We also travel via snow machines throughout this area.I can be reached at 372-4380 during the day or 488-2665 in the evenings if you have any questions.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**8-Aug-01**

**Donald M. Schell**

Comment: I would like to add my voice to those opposing the use of airboats in the flats. Airboats have a lasting impact on the landscape and vegetation as is evident every time I fly into Fairbanks and detract greatly from the enjoyment of the area by other users. As the antithesis of a peaceful wilderness experience, airboats ruin the quiet for a large radius around their operation and I would also suspect they negatively impact the wildlife usage (all species, not just game). Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**8-Aug-01**

**Emma Lee & Joe Grennan**

Comment: We thank you for taking your valuable time to consider this important resolution regarding the Army prohibiting access to the Tanana Flats for traditional civilian hunting, fishing and trapping. We are members of the Interior Alaska Airboat Association and the Alaska Outdoor Council and have used the Tanana Flats for hunting, fishing and recreation for over 20 years. The Army basically hid this change in their draft Natural Resource Plan without adequate notification to the public. The Army is mandated to allow the public to hunt and use this area of the Tanana Flats. The Department of Fish and Game has spent a lot of time and money to improve moose populations and habitat in the area for hunting. How else can we access our traditional hunting areas without the aid of our airboats and off road vehicles? Minimal, it any, disturbance of the vegetation is caused by our use. This area of the Tanana Flats is not even used by the military for training! How can we continue to feed our families without access to this area as we have traditionally and customarily done for decades. We have sent our comments to the military and hope that you will consider and support Resolution 2001-52. Thank you for your time and consideration for the citizens of Fairbanks. The Army and the civilian community must live and work together in harmony. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10.*

**8-Aug-01**

**Gail Owen**

Comment: As an 85 year old Alaska resident, I totally oppose the ORV ban, as I have enjoyed many trips into the flats with my daughter and her husband over the years. I can see no logical reason for such an action.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**8-Aug-01**  
**GEORGE GRIFFARD**

Comment: I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT IN THE HECK IS HAPPENING? WE FIND THE TANANA FLATS ARE CLOSING TO AIRBOATS. THIS IS VERY UP SETTING AS I'VE HUNTED THERE A NUMBER OF YEARS AND THAT'S MY FAMILY'S MAIN SUPPLY OF MOOSE MEAT. WE'VE BEEN TOLD THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT PERMANENT DAMAGE TO THE SWAMP COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO AIRBOATS. SO WHAT IS THE REASONING? THE ARMY HASN'T USED THE AREA FOR MANY, MANY YEARS AS A TRAINING SITE. THE AREA LIES AT THE END OF THE RUNWAY FOR THE FAIRBANKS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND THE POWER LINES ARE GOING TO BE RUNNING ACROSS THE FLATS. I AM ASSUMING THEY DON'T PLAN ON USING THIS AS A BOMBING RANGE. AS FAR AS PERMANENT DAMAGE GOES ANYONE FLYING OVER THE AREA CAN SEE WHAT THE ARMY HAS LEFT. ANY GOOD SPORTSMAN WOULD NEVER LEAVE THE MESS IN THE OUTDOORS THAT WAS LEFT. SOMETHING HAS TO BE DONE ABOUT THE MILITARY STOPPING THE USE OF RECREATIONAL, USE OF PUBLIC LANDS IN THIS STATE THAT THEY ARE NOT USING. LAND WHICH BELONGS TO ALL AMERICANS. (THE PEOPLE) I AM VERY UPSET ABOUT THIS AS WELL AS A WHOLE LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE. WE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO AT LEAST KNOW THE REASON. A VERY CONCERNED CITIZEN.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5 and 8.*

**8-Aug-01**  
**Gilbert Johnson**

Comment: I object to this proposal. Access to the Tanana Flats is more than hard enough as it is now with out more restrictions being added. I also think that access should be made more available without imposing more "hoops" to leap through like registering and permitting processes.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8-Aug-01**  
**John Alden**

Comment: To prevent further loss of vegetation, soils, and habitat, I agree with your proposal to close Tanana Flats to off-road vehicle use. Even winter snow machine use breaks small seedlings and trees. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8-Aug-01**  
**John J Megyesi**

Comment: In regard to the army's proposed banning of motor vehicle in the Tanana flats the Fairbanks Snow Travlers do not support this ban. The army agreed many years ago to keep this area open to all. As the News Miner stated every time they get a new commander in Alaska they want to close the flats. Again our club does NOT support this ban.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8-Aug-01**  
**John W. Denton**

Comment: I have been hunting on the flats with airboats and ORVs since 1973 and I totally oppose this proposed ban. I feel certain that if Mr Blair had ever anticipated such a move by the Army, he would have never given them the land. Thanks.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 4.*

**8-Aug-01**  
**L.S. Davis**

Comment: I wish to make known my opposition to any plan that would prohibit, restrict, or limit the use of two, three, or four wheeled off road vehicles or airboats in the Tanana Flats for the following reasons. 1. It would completely eliminate hunting for me and most all others in any part of the Tanana Flats except for the areas within a few hundred yards of the Tanana river, the areas along streams that can be traveled by river boat and areas close around landing strips. Packing out a moose on good ground is a difficult job. Packing a moose out on your back in the Tanana Flats is a job that most people could not complete. It would result in moose being killed and the meat not being recovered or only partially recovered. 2. It would result in little or no hunting pressure in most areas of the Tanana Flats, and over hunting in the areas along the Tanana river, streams and areas around landing strips. Most areas in the Tanana Flats already receives very light hunting pressure because of the difficulty in getting into the areas and the difficulty in getting a moose out. Stopping the use of off road vehicle and airboats would change this from difficult to nearly impossible. 3. I believe it would result in an over population of moose in the Tanana Flats. Very few people would be willing to put out the amount of effort required to hunt the Flats with out the aid of some type of off road wheeled vehicle. This over populated would soon deplete the food supply and lead to a die off of moose in the Tanana Flats. It would take many years for the moose to recover from such a die off. I ask that any restriction that would limit the use of two, three, or four wheel vehicles or airboats be removed from the Army's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the year 2002-2006. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6 and 7.*

**8-Aug-01**  
**M. Torre Jorgenson**

Comment: I am writing to comment on the plan to ban airboats and other off-highway vehicles on the Tanana Flats. I am very much in favor of such a ban. I have spent a great deal of time on the Tanana Flats and am disturbed by the damage to vegetation I see from airboats, and by their noise. I hunted moose up Clear Creek on the Flats a few years ago and really disliked the sound of the airboats cruising around and around all day. It is an unfair way to hunt, since they can drive right up to a moose and shoot it. It makes it very difficult for anyone without an airboat to hunt. Thank you for your consideration.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8-Aug-01**

**Millard C. Davis, Jr.**

Comment: I wish to make known my opposition to any plan that would prohibit, restrict, or limit the use of two, three, or four wheeled off road vehicles or airboats in the Tanana Flats for the following reasons. 1. It would completely eliminate hunting for me and most all others in any part of the Tanana Flats except for the areas within 100 or 200 yards of the Tanana river or the streams that can be traveled by river boat or areas close around landing strips. Packing out a moose on foot on good ground is a difficult task. Packing a moose out on foot in the Tanana Flats is a task that most people could not complete. It would result in moose being killed and the meat not being recovered or only partially recovered. 2. It would result in little or no hunting pressure in most areas of the Tanana Flats, and over hunting in the areas along the Tanana river, streams and areas around landing strips. Most areas in the Tanana Flats already receives very light hunting pressure because of the difficulty in getting into the areas and the difficulty in getting a moose out. Stopping the use of off road vehicle and airboats would change this from difficult to nearly impossible. 3. I believe it would result in an over population of moose in the Tanana Flats because very few people would be willing to put out the amount of effort that would be required to hunt in most areas of the Flats. This over populated would soon lead to a die off of moose in the Tanana Flats due to a decreasing food supply. It would take many years for the moose to recover from such a die off. 4. I have hunted the Tanana Flats with two, three and four wheel off road vehicle and found these hunts to be the most difficult of all my moose hunts. Without the use of these off road vehicle I would not have been able to hunt moose in the Tanana Flats. I ask that any restriction that would limit the use of two, three, or four wheel vehicles or airboats be removed from the Army's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the year 2002-2006. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6 and 7.*

**8-Aug-01**

**MSgt Ben Johnson, USAF**

Comment: I am strongly opposed to the plan to close the Tanana Flats to public use. That is what the US Army is trying to do when they disallow ORV use there. The way it was delivered has already caused much embarrassment to the Army. It is such an offensive gesture that I will be surprised if no repercussions are felt. By closing the flats to ORVs you are denying Alaskans use of land and resources guaranteed them under the state constitution. You are also: Creating a game management problem by denying access to wolves, coyotes, lynx and other fur bearers. Creating an environment that will threaten moose and caribou populations. Denying access of photographers, nature observers, outdoor enthusiasts, etc. May result in the problem McGrath is currently having. If the Army really wants a closed range, then the quickest way to do it would be to deny access that ensures a balance of wildlife in the Tanana Flats. If the Army wants to completely alienate a local population then continue in your efforts to ban ORV use. Respectfully.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7.*

**8-Aug-01**

**Paul A. Barrett**

Comment: I've been in Alaska since 1973. In that time the Army has consistently and loudly proclaimed its intention to be a good neighbor with the communities impacted by its presence. I cannot reconcile that professed attitude with your proposal to greatly restrict access to Fairbanks traditional playground, the Tanana Flats. That such a proposal would be made is, to say the least, insensitive to the wants and needs of the greater Fairbanks community. If your stated good neighbor policy is sincere, I trust that you will withdraw this proposal promptly.

*Response: Comment noted.*

**9-Aug-01**

**Daniel T. Vavra**

Comment: My family and I have been hunting and fishing the Tanana Flats for eight years. This activity is very important to our family life. We have never encountered any military equipment or personnel and can't see how our enjoyment possibly interferes with the Army's use of this land. Without ATV use, access would be impossible. Some of our friends have been utilizing this land for half a century and are equally shocked by this terrible proposal. The only result of this ban being implemented would be a severe degradation of civilian vs. military relations. Please be instrumental in shooting down the plan to restrict civilian access to the Tanana Flats. Respectfully.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 5.*

**9-Aug-01**

**Dave Waldo**

Comment: And what right does the army have making environmental statements. There has never been a larger impact to Alaska's environment than the US Army. That is a fact. Not my words but the words of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and the opinion of consumptive users and environmentalists alike. Not only that, Military personnel are responsible for over 80% of all fish and game violations in Alaska. I think the Army needs to stay away from this battle. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted.*

**9-Aug-01**

**Janet Jorgenson**

Comment: Thank you so much for proposing a ban on airboats, four-wheelers, and etc. on Tanana Flats! I hope you can succeed in banning them. My main objection is to the airboats, but I'd be happy to see all off-road vehicles banned. Every time I fly over the Flats I can clearly see the vehicle trails all over the place. I am a botanist by trade and know that those vehicles are damaging the vegetation. The airboat trails are obviously opening up open water that would normally be covered with emergent plants and this has got to be changing the drainage patterns in the Flats, creating an unnatural landscape. Mt husband went moose hunting on Tanana Flats 3 or 4 years ago and I don't think he'll ever try that again, unless airboats are banned. They did manage to get a small bull, which he referred to as 'the one the



airboaters missed'. He said the airboats were going all hours of the day and into the night, ruining the hunting experience for anyone within earshot. It sounds to me like they just go out and drive around incessantly until they run into something. That takes little skill. I assume that as a federal land managing agency you have guidelines to protect and preserve the land you manage. Please stand firm and don't be intimidated by the airboaters' response to your proposal. The vast majority of people in this community do not own airboats and I bet most of them dislike being around them as much as I do! Thank you. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**9-Aug-01**  
**Jim Whisenhant**

Comment: Forty-two years ago I made my first hunting trip to the Tanana Flats and have missed only a few hunting seasons in the flats since, that time. Those early years I traveled by float plane to the Blair Lakes, while the last thirty five I have gone by canoe up Clear Creek. During those flying years, I flew over much of the flats and never observed a single airboat - not even the trail of one left in the tall grass or small brush. For the first twenty-five years of canoe hunting, I never observed a single airboat in the Clear Creel area. My encounter with airboats began about ten years ago and the frequency of encounters have increased each year. Most hunters, including myself, would like to be successful in our attempt to harvest game, but for many of us a quality hunt is just as important as the kill. This is where many canoe and jon boat hunters part ways with the airboat hunter. Let me describe a typical moose hunt up Clear Creek by canoe or jon boat. Spruce and birch trees, along with the willow and the alder, line the banks of Clear Creek. A hunting party will usually select a campsite near the base of a tall spruce tree, which is commonly referred to as a climbing or spotting tree. Over many years of use, climbing trees can be easily identified. Some of the trees exceed 100 feet in height, A hunter perched on the upper branches will have a commanding view of the open fields and swamps that boarder the creek. Seldom do two or three hours pass that the hunter in the tree does not spot a moose. Unfortunately, more often than not, the animal is anywhere from one-half mile to two miles away. The hunter must be patient and wait for the moose to move in his direction; hoping that an airboat won't roar into ear shot of the moose and send him scurrying. Most moose are shot from a tree within 200 yards of the creek. Grayling are often caught from the creek for the evening meal. Many hours are spent around a campfire sharing stories of previous hunts and listening to the sounds of the wilderness. Unfortunately the sounds of the wilderness are being replaced by the roar of airboats which can be heard as far as two miles away. Their use not only occurs during day light hours, but at night with lights blazing as they skim across wide open expanses-One airboat has the capability to diminish or destroy a quality hunt for numerous other hunters. The canoe/jon boat hunters pursue their prey by quietly waiting for the game to come to them. One can easily see that hunting by airboat is diametrically opposed to canoe/jon boat hunting and has the potential for conflict. I would personally prefer that airboats be banned from the Tanana Flats, but I realize the military is in a difficult public relations situation. If the military feels compelled to make some sort of compromise, I would like to suggest that airboats be banned

for three miles on both sides of Clear Creek and within three miles of the Blair Lakes.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**9-Aug-01**  
**Joyce Hammock**

Comment: I am opposed to your move that you stop the ATVs and airboats from going to Tanana Flats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**9-Aug-01**  
**Patrick A. Lenord**

Comment: I have lived in the North Star Borough since January 1962 and like many others we want to keep our wilderness the way it is. Keep the Airboats & ATVs out. If these individuals are such great hunters then let them hike it. I hope the Army doesn't back down. There are few chances left to save what we love of Alaska, the wilderness. Give em' hell.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**9-Aug-01**  
**Percy Houts**

Comment: The Tanana Flats under military use needs to remain open to airboat use. There is no damage done to the area as a result of this use. While trails are visible during the hunting season, it is merely a matter of vegetation being pushed to one side. In the spring there is absolutely no sign of use. This area can not be used by the military for maneuvers since it is directly on the approach path to the Fairbanks International Airport. If a problem exists with the civilian use, then perhaps the Military should relinquish there entitlement to use the property. You could easily establish a boundary from the Bonneville Trail to the Tanana as open to use and close the area from the Trail on out to the end of the Range. The approach you have chosen to use has a definite chilling effect on support for the military.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, and 8.*

**9-Aug-01**  
**Sverre Pedersen**

Comment: I support the proposed ban on airboat use in the Tanana Flats for a variety of reasons. that I will touch on briefly. Airbots have been found to be destructive to vegetation and waterfowl in the area while also representing unfair and unsportmanlike hunting competition to other users in the flats. Noise from airboats is an incredible nuisance to traditional moosehunters (which in my experience represent the vast majority of users in the flats) and negatively affects the enjoyment of hunting in the area. Thus access to the area by a few hunters strongly affects the use of many others. Furthermore, airboats are basically like helicopters in that they are able to take a hunter to just about any hunting area in the flats. Helicopters are not allowed as a hunting access tool, and airboats should be treated the same way. They provide unfair access and their sound overwhelms other users. I see no reason to allow a hunting/recreation tool which has so

many negative effects to be used in the Tanana Flats. I have hunted the Salchaket/Clearwater area for years by canoe and have only had experiences with airboaters which range from irritating (airboat sound blanketing my hunting area for hours on end), unfair competition (airboaters sailing into a prime hunting spot I have quietly and carefully walked into from my hunting camp) to dangerous (meeting airboats travelling at high speed on small streams). In my experience airboaters are a small group of uncourteous, ignorant, inconsiderate and unsportsmanlike users of the area. For the above reasons I do not believe that airboats should be permitted in the Tanana Flats area. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**10-Aug-01  
H.E. SUSDORF**

Comment: I AM OPPOSED TO RESTRICTIONS ON ATV AND AIRBOAT USE ON TANANA FLATS.

*Response: Comment noted*

**10-Aug-01  
Peter R. Buist**

Comment: Thank you for the extended opportunity to comment on the Draft INRMP. I have used the Tanana Flats portion of the Ft. Wainwright Reservation for trapping and hunting for nearly 30 years. My comments are as follows: 1. The arbitrary closure of these public lands to ATV and airboat use is neither necessary nor advisable. The Draft INRMP references no data showing that these uses are either incompatible with the military mission or in any way damaging natural resources in the area. There are data available noting that airboat impacts are negligible and inconsequential. Thus one is left to assume that the decision to ban these uses is purely political. It points toward an unfortunate and unprofessional bias on the part of the consultants working on this project and those in a position to review it. Since there is no conflict with the mission, no documented biological problem and no public purpose that is served by the proposed ban, the area should remain open to these uses. 2. The apparent efforts to obscure this major change in policy about public access to a traditionally used area are not appreciated. In fact, one is left wondering if the efforts to obscure the changes were just (at best) shoddy work, or (at worst) deceitful. Actions such as these are the antithesis of public involvement programs used in natural resource management projects. The military and their consultant should be more honest and forthcoming about drastic proposals if they ever expect to implement the plan. The problems with this have tainted the entire project. To attempt to avoid public scrutiny is to invite public uproar, Congressional oversight and other political influence. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 8, and 10.*

**11-Aug-01  
Jerry Cain**

Comment: I would like to comment on the Army plan to close the Tanana Flats to airboats, 4-wheelers, etc. as follows: Very little of the Tanana Flats is accessible to vehicles of any kind, whether those prohibited in this proposal or otherwise. By far the majority of the Flats is simply unavailable to any

kind of traffic. Therefore, the impact of these vehicles is tremendously minimal in area. Furthermore, the impact of the vehicles covered under this proposal is extremely minimal. Airboats don't really even affect the vegetation that they run over; 4-wheelers leave almost no track. Very few other vehicles of any kind use the flats. There is some use of small track vehicles transported by boat, but again, their impact is negligible. The effect on the game population in the flats is extremely minimal due to the fact that the area covered by hunters is so small. I have flown over the flats and seen moose quite close to hunters, but neither was aware of the other due to the vegetation. Furthermore, if the impact of the hunters on game was excessive, that is a game management problem, not a vehicular problem, and should be solved by regulation of the hunting season, bag limits, etc. Considering the above, it is my view that the advantage to the general public of being able to use the Flats greatly outweighs the impact caused by them. I look on this plan of the Army's as being one driven by two factors. One is the bowing to pressure from groups that simply want the public restricted from using this land in any form. The second is simply a "knee jerk" reaction by the Army, and they are saying that the public simply can't be trusted on "our" lands. I don't see any rational basis for either of these factors. There is no history of conflict between the Army and the occasional users of the Tanana Flats in the past, and I see no particular potential for problems in the future. I would be happy to testify in person if such is desired. Thank you,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8.*

**12-Aug-01  
Frank E. Hollis**

Comment: I want to state that I am against any restriction of any type on any sort of vehicle or method of access that the citizens of the State of Alaska may utilize to access land that the Army currently is managing in the State of Alaska. I also want to express my distaste for the way the Army tried to close off these lands to public.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**13-Aug-01  
Angela Matz**

Comment: Please include the proposed ban on airboats, four-wheelers, and other off-highway vehicles in the Tanana Flats in your integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for 2002-2006. The damage these vehicles cause to the Flats are unacceptable. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**13-Aug-01  
Dan O'Neill**

Comment: I strongly support the proposed restrictions. I have used the military land in the Tanana Flats for twenty-three years for hunting, fishing and boating. Airboats seriously degrade the quality of everyone else's peaceful use of the resource, as they degrade the vegetative mat and the hydrologic regime of the Flats. Aerial photos clearly show the progressive destruction, as trails have grown like cancer through the Flats. Twenty-three years ago I started hunting

up a narrow little creek off the Tanana River, My Grumman canoe and kicker make it there in about three hours on not much more than a gallon of gas. My outboard is pretty quiet, and that paid off noticeably once when we pulled up to my spot, threw our gear on the bank, and a few minutes later shot a bull perhaps a hundred yards from camp. Things have been less quiet over there in recent years. Airboats started moving in, heading up ox-bows and meadows that link up with the Tanana. Just about every evening, just toward dusk, you could hear them fire up, miles away, but all too audible. A steady background din that lasted until dark. From the noise, you could tell how they were hunting. They didn't use the boat to get to an area, then park the thing and walk or climb a tree. They hunted while driving. They drive until, rounding a bend, they drive up on the stunned animals and blast them. Essentially, they "road hunt." We like to call moose. But when airboats are in the area, we have to wait for the brief periods when they are silent. It makes you wonder what effect this constant noise imposed on a formerly quiet expanse of swamp has on moose behavior. Moose vocalizations must be interfered with, too. Starting in 1996, it got worse. Now airboats were driving the little creek itself. Let me try to describe a scene. My buddy and I had a real nice camp. Wall tent and a wood stove. It snowed while the yellow leaves were mostly still on the birches, and snow and frost whitened every twig overhanging the black water. Streaming sunlight made the yellow leaves glow and the snow crystals flash. It was as pretty a fall picture as I've ever seen. We were in camp about mid-day getting something to eat in this lovely setting when an annoying racket got nearer and nearer, louder and louder. Not long after we ceased to be able to hear ourselves think, we stood by the bank and stared up the creek. Around the bend it came, roaring full force. Because these boats have no rudder in the water, tight turns are a problem. And this creek is nothing but tight turns. So what they'd do is crank their (air) rudder over hard, give the enormous aircraft engine full throttle and, with a wake-the-dead blast of noise and air, skid around the turns. We were still staring, open-mouthed, when they swung into the turn below and raked us with their prop wash. Our tin cups and plates went bouncing off across the camp like tumbleweeds. Their huge wake just about swamped our tied-up canoe. And the air blast stripped every last leaf and bit of snow off the trees. A moment before, the scene was the most amazing landscape painting in yellow and gold, silver and white. Now it was a pen and ink sketch. When they were out of sight-though not out of hearing-we were just speechless, standing there looking over our disheveled and denuded camp as the last yellow leaves sifted down around us. Not long ago I was in my tent at ten o'clock at night, well after dark, when the distant clamor became a not so distant blaring. Soon it was an ear-splitting assault. And it was pushing a block of daylight before it that I could see through the trees for several bends. Two of the damned things, with light bars blazing. Obviously, such experiences are utterly incongruous with the nature-linked values celebrated by the Outdoor Council-types in defense of hunting and trapping. These ardent and outspoken outdoors advocates speak in hushed tones of a hunting trip's capacity to rejuvenate as it brings one in touch with elemental human nature. And I buy all that. I really do. But does it need to be pointed out to groups like the Outdoor Council-which embraces air boats floating dragsters are just the tiniest bit at odds with those qualities of the natural setting that foster introspection and peace? I am aware of the research done by Alaska Biological Research that shows

airboats' tendency to create canals that slowly drain fen areas. I am opposed to the unsportsman-like advantage airboaters bring to the hunt (we don't let people hunt with helicopters). I object to the way each one of these relatively few boats can, with their stupefying noise, degrade the outdoor experience of every waterfront resident and recreationist within a 5-mile radius. I applaud the Army's courageous effort on behalf of the ecosystem they manage to stand up to these few, well-organized, law-suit-threatening bullies. You are doing the right thing, and you will get the strong support of a large majority of this community. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**13-Aug-01  
Dave Lambert**

Comment: Why is the Army about to close the tanana flat access. We have used that area for years to feed our family. The water ways were made by the Army not the airboat's. The area south of the air port is not used by the Army as it is the approach to the Fairbanks airport. Please let me know what we can do to stop this?

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 6, and 10.*

**13-Aug-01  
David Payer**

Comment: I strongly support the U.S. Army's proposed ban on airboats, four-wheelers, and other off-highway vehicles in the Tanana Flats. These vehicles are destroying the fragile wetlands that compose the Flats- I am aghast when I fly over the area and view the damage that has occurred in such a short time. Please include these restrictions in your integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for 2002-2006. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**13-Aug-01  
Steve Thurneau**

Comment: Tanana Flats. To the editor: There's absolutely no logical reason for banning four-wheelers and airboats from the Tanana Flats. Only 1 percent of Alaska is accessible to hunting, mining, logging, etc. This is just part of the environmentalist extremist wacko agenda to turn our whole state into one big park. To all you hunters out there, don't just by and wait for someone else to fight your battles for you. Even if you don't hunt on the Flats or have an airboat or four-wheeler, stand up to this injustice now by calling Rep. Don Young (456-0210), Sen. Ted Stevens (456-0261), or Sen. Murkowski (456-0233). Speak out against this injustice now or some day you'll be fighting for your method of hunting. The anti's always start with the easiest target but eventually they'll get around to canoes and paddles. It's not about the airboats, it's about hunting. Pro: hunting, fishing, bogging, snowmachining, four-wheeling, airboating, jetboating, mining, road building, oil drilling, gas burning, tree cutting, gun toting.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 10.*

**14-Aug-01**  
**Mary Shields**

Comment: I commend you for having the courage to ban ORVs and airboats from the Tanana Flats. I have camped and hunted for moose on Clear Creek ( using a canoe) and I am concerned about the damage to wildlife habitat from the web of trails, and noise created by these vehicles. What effect do snowmachines have? Perhaps they should come under some limit also?? Looking down at the flats from the airplane window, really shows how evasive this web is. It will be the trap that catches us all, If we don't do something about it. What we do to the land, we do to ourselves. Good Work I

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**14-Aug-01**  
**Northern Alaska Environmental Center**

Comment: beleaguered wetlands in many years. Currently, airboats and four-wheelers tear through delicate vegetation, leaving it unable to recover. They create noise pollution that disturbs humans and wildlife alike, disrupting nesting birds and calving moose. The new plan wouldn't shut out motorized access entirely; instead, it would restrict airboats to river channels, would restrict summertime ORV use to upland areas, and would allow snowmachine use only when the ground is adequately frozen and snow-covered. The areas covered by the plan include the 650,000 acre Tanana Flats Training Area, which includes most of the land between the Wood River and the Tanana River to 32 miles south of the main Ft. Wainwright post; and the Yukon Training Area, a 260,000 acre area next to Eielson, between the Chena and Salcha Rivers northeast of the Richardson Highway. ---- The stated goals of the management plan are military readiness; stewardship of the land; quality of life (which includes recreation and other uses); compliance with laws and regulations; and integration of natural resource management into Fort Wainwright's programs as a whole. ---- The document lists problems with ORV use as including exposure of ORV users to dangers associated with unexploded ordnance, shelling, and firing; interference with ongoing military activities; theft and vandalism; and most critically, damage to soils and vegetation. ---- The plan states that "ORVs of all kinds seem to make us of places that are relatively unaffected by military vehicles. The damage they cause to wet, boggy areas and more rugged, steep terrain can be significant. These areas, particularly the subalpine and alpine area, are very important to the overall ecology of Alaska." ---Threatened, endangered, or state-sensitive birds in the area include the American peregrine falcon, bald eagle, osprey, trumpeter swan, gray-cheeked thrush, blackpoll warbler, golden eagle, olive-sided flycatcher, Arctic peregrine falcon, and Townsend warbler. ---- During migration periods, more than 300,000 cranes and 20,000 geese, ducks, and swans pass through the Fort Greely/Delta area, using Fort Wainwright wetlands as important staging areas. ---- Sixteen rare or imperiled plants also grow in this area. WANT TO KNOW MORE? Review copies of the Draft Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) for Fort Wainwright are available for review at the Noel Wien and North Pole public libraries, at the Fort Wainwright Environmental Office (Building 3023 located on the corner of Engineer Place and Neely Road), and at the Fairbanks offices of Senators Stevens and Murkowski and Congressman Young.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**14-Aug-01**  
**Sang and Darrell Bohn**

Comment: Please put us down as two people opposed to the closure of the Tannin Flats. We use the Flats for winter recreation and for wildlife viewing. Its close to Fairbanks and quick get away from the city. This area has lots of trails for winter and summer use. The loss of this area would be a big loss to the community here in Fairbanks. So please do not lock us out of the Tanana Flats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**14-Aug-01**  
**Thomas J. Classen**

Comment: Your plan to limit the use of ATVs on the Tanana flats is a good one. In fact I think they should be completely eliminated. But watch out for the reaction from our Alaskan politicians as they respond only to money and to hell with the land or wildlife. I hope you will stand by your guns as it is the right thing to do.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**14-Aug-01**  
**Tim Ristow**

Comment: I'm not sure what to believe anymore as to what will be closed and when. But if you're trying to get people upset that is for certain working. You do not close down the closest most accessible recreation area to the community and expect the community to remain hospitable. Please don't follow through with this closure, be it summer or winter usage. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**14-Aug-01**  
**William D. Arvey, Bill Arvey**

Comment: Following are my comments on the proposed ORV restrictions on military lands near Fairbanks. I support the proposal to limit access to ORVs on military lands, particularly airboats. I believe the Management Plan is correct in asserting that these vehicles are negatively impacting the Tanana Flats by creating pathways through the wetlands that affect wetland drainage patterns, soils and vegetation. This use also affects birds and other wildlife that depend on the flats for habitat and migration. Before the advent of heavy airboat use in the flats near Fairbanks, moose and other animals such as black bears would commonly be sighted near the permanent sloughs and waterways in the northeastern sections near the Tanana River. Now it is rare to encounter these animals because airboats intercept so many animals far out in the flats. Wildlife has essentially been pushed far back into the flats and foothills because of airboat hunting activity. In addition, airboats themselves produce unacceptable levels of noise disturbance to all other living creatures, including people who happen to be within a several mile radius of their activity. The thunderous noise created by many airboats is almost unbelievable to witness. We own a small cabin on the north side of the Tanana River where we escape from time to time to enjoy quiet and solitude. There



is no peace and quiet for the first 15 days of September, day or night, because of airboat activity in the sloughs and flats in the area of our cabin. It is customary for airboats to hunt at night in the flats, despite claims to the contrary by airboat proponents. The Army has concerns for unexploded ordnance that exist on military lands, and has prohibited access to several areas, such as the clearwater streams off the Salchaket Slough, like Bear Creek to traditional riverboat access. I don't feel that it is fair to restrict only those kinds of boaters who must pass checkpoints on their way to those areas, and not to restrict airboaters or airplanes who are capable of bypassing any checkpoints. I hope the Army intends to include unauthorized airstrips, trespass cabins, and other structures that have been built over the years in it's effort to regain control over military lands. While I feel airboats to be the major problem, it would only be fair to treat all unauthorized uses equally. Thank you for extending the comment period and allowing my comments to be considered. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**15-Aug-01  
Marin Kuizenga**

Comment: I am writing to congratulate and encourage the Army on their choice to limit airboats and ORVs on the Tanana Flats. Your restrictions sound very fair and well-reasoned. While moose hunting by canoe in the Flats, I have been nearly run over twice by airboats. These boats are very noisy as well. As for ORVs, the impact these vehicles have on the wetter areas seems irreparable. It is impossible to access or use areas that people have abused with off-road traffic. I commend your decision.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**15-Aug-01  
Stephen Davila**

Comment: Please allow this letter to serve as our strongest objection to the proposed closure of the Tanana Flats portion of Ft. Wainwright to the use of ATVs and airboats. Many members of our organization make seasonal use of the Tanana Flats. Most of them do not own airboats or have any use for them. But to suggest that either airboats or ATVs are having a negative impact on the flats is just silly and shows that the company doing your work on the EIS knows little about the area. In fact, past studies have clearly shown that there is no damage. We are afraid that this was a purely political decision that was taken without any research or scientific study behind it. We are also troubled by the lengths that your office went to to conceal the proposed changes from the public. This is not a professional or ethical way to present such a drastic change in public policy. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Yours truly.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 8, and 10.*

**15-Aug-01  
William Harrison**

Comment: I would like to comment on your Integrated National Resources Management Plan for 2002-2006, a draft version of which is in the Fairbanks Public Library. I notice that today, August 15 is the last date to comment, but I could not find out, at the library or on base where to comment when I tried. I hope that you can accept my comments anyway. I

am particularly interested in the use of ORVs on the Tanana Flats, particularly in the use of airboats. I have flown over the flats many times in summer and seen the damage they have done out there - new channels, altered drainage, and unsightly appearance. I fully support your proposal to limit their access to the major rivers. To be frank, I would be most happy if they could be eliminated entirely. In addition to the physical damage they cause, the noise they make is insane. Also, I don't believe it is fair to the animals or to hunters without expensive airboats that hunting should be done this way. I know that you must have your own military reasons and legal expertise, and I assume that there are good legal reasons for limiting airboat access as you propose. Please stick to your guns and do not be swayed by the Interior (Air) Boaters' Association. It is a well organized and vocal but small special interest group which does not represent the public at large. They want to be able to go anywhere regardless of the public interest. I hope that it will not be too long before there is a parallel hunting and Tanana River resident group which will represent a larger segment of the public opposed to the use of airboats. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**16-Aug-01  
Duane Howe**

Comment: The proposed management plan is a good step in the right direction for the Tanana Flats and Yukon training areas. Alaska's seemingly unending wilderness can give the impression that spoiling a few small areas will not matter in the long run. As we have learned from mistakes made in the lower 48, this is what leads to eventual major losses of wildlife habitat and ecological integrity. It has taken too long for us to learn that we must take care of all the parts of our environment in order to keep the whole of it intact. Plans such as this will help ensure that the destructive trend will not continue. I hope you will enforce the plan as written and not allow the ORV folks to shake your resolve to protect the environment from selfish destructive uses. The ORV industry has been putting a lot of pressure on public land managers to allow the use of their products almost everywhere. This, or any other industry, cannot be allowed to dictate public land management policies. They seem to have no ethics for sharing the use of the land with those who value naturalness over the thrills of speed and the ease of travel afforded by machines that can go almost anywhere. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your management plan.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**16-Aug-01  
Edna Hancock**

Comment: Just thought I would let you know how I feel about airboaters in the Tanana Flats. I don't like them. The airboaters have destroyed lakes around the Tanana River on tributaries and sloughs. These machines are very destructive to the land. Do not allow them to tear up any more land.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**16-Aug-01  
Frank and Jennifer Keim**

Comment: Please include us among those who wish to see the military limit ORV use on public lands, in this case a military base. For too long ORVs have destroyed our

backcountry and ruined habitat for wildlife. It is about time to limit their use. If we had our way, we would ban them altogether. Thank you, and keep up the good work.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**16-Aug-01  
Harry G. Schuster**

Comment: Please leave the tanana flats area open for recreation use. Public land is held in trust for the use of all the citizens. That's a prime moose hunting area. We need motorized vehicles to gain access. Vehicles should only be prohibited if they can be proven to be causing serious environmental damage. The moose I've encountered don't seem to even notice the air boats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, and 8.*

**16-Aug-01  
Mark Piedra**

Comment: I fully support the Army's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the years 2002-2006 in its ORV restrictions in the Tanana Flats. 10-year resident.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**16-Aug-01  
Smokey**

Comment: I'm writing to protest the Army's proposed closure of the Tanana Flats to hunting, boating, snowmachining, berry picking, hiking and other activities. It is inconceivable to me what the Army has to gain by such a proposal, if anything... It is certainly clear to me that much would be lost to myself and other Alaskan's by this proposal who use the Flats for various activities, including but not limited to those enumerated above. I appreciate the fact that the Army extended the comment period, especially in light of the obvious (even if not intentional) secrecy in the initial announcement of the proposal. The initial announcement of the proposal may have met the letter of the law regarding such matters, but certainly fell far short of the intent for such notification. It is my hope that the Army will abandon this ill advised proposal, and let Alaskan's get on with their lives.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**16-Aug-01  
Steve Adams**

Comment: I'm writing to protest the Army's proposed closure of the Tanana Flats to hunting, boating, snowmachining, berry picking, hiking and other activities. It is inconceivable to me what the Army has to gain by such a proposal, if anything... It is certainly clear to me that much would be lost to myself and other Alaskan's by this proposal who use the Flats for various activities, including but not limited to those enumerated above. I appreciate the fact that the Army extended the comment period, especially in light of the obvious (even if not intentional) secrecy in the initial announcement of the proposal. The initial announcement of the proposal may have met the letter of the law regarding such matters, but certainly fell far short of the intent for such notification. It is my hope that the Army will abandon this ill advised proposal, and let Alaskan's get on with their lives.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**17-Aug-01  
Don Quarberg,**

Comment: I would like to register my opposition to the US Army imposing additional restrictions on the general public wishing to recreate on the Tanana Flats. I have been using the area for 20 years (snowmachining, photographing, trapping, hunting, hiking, camping and just enjoying the country). We have always done this in cooperation with the military and would hope that this will always be the case. Please inform me of any proposal which would infringe on these types of activity. Thank You.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6 and 10.*

**17-Aug-01  
Jean Brown**

Comment: I am very much against closing the Tanana Flats area to 3/4 wheelers and airboats which have not made an impact on the environment of that area. I feel if closed it would only allow the wealthy and military which have airplanes and equipment to access the area. Thanks for your time.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 8.*

**17-Aug-01  
John K Petersen**

Comment: Management plan. To the editor: There must be something wrong with airboats; they are banned from the Minto Flats, the Palmer Hay Flats and the Nenana Controlled Use area. The Army, however, is not banning airboats on Fort Wainwright; they are simply restricting them to within the channels of the streams and rivers during the unfrozen months. They are just asking the minority of airboats to follow the same routes that the majority of other hunters use. Besides, the Army cannot legally use Off Road Vehicles during the summer; -it only makes sense that they ask others to meet the same level of land stewardship they must meet as required by Congress. The Army is not planning to restrict hunting, trapping, or fishing activities as long as these activities do not involve driving a vehicle on sensitive terrain during unfrozen months. I have hunted, fished and trapped on Fort Wainwright and I support this change in the Natural Resources Management Plan.

*Response: Comment noted.*

**17-Aug-01  
Martha Reynolds**

Comment: I was very happy to learn that Fort Wainwright's recent Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan includes some limitations on motorized traffic in the Tanana Flats area. I am a plant ecologist, and have studied and mapped the vegetation of the Tanana Flats. Everytime I fly into Fairbanks, I get treated to views of the marvelous vegetation patterns of the Flats. When I first saw those patterns in the early 1980's, there were a few winter trails that were visible due to heavy use. In the last few years however, the trails that have been used by airboats are becoming more like highways. They are now affecting the drainage patterns

in ways that the snow-machine trails never did. I encourage you to include restrictions on motorized traffic in the Flats to protect the vegetation and the ecosystem that it supports. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**17-Aug-01  
Nancy Franco**

Comment: I am writing to express my support for the US Army Alaska's decision to limit ORV and airboat access on the Tanana Flats, as described in the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan. Summer use of ORVs in the wetlands is extremely destructive to soil and plant life. Inappropriate airboat use in shallow water and wetlands has similar effects on the vegetative mat, and additionally causes significant noise pollution. Habitat destruction and disruptive noise have been a long-standing problem in the area, and I applaud your decision to remedy the problem. In addition, I support your concern for human safety in the Alpha Impact Area. I realize that many misinformed people may protest the Army's decision on the grounds that it will close off hunting, but I respect that this is not the case. ORV activists may also protest, but I strongly stand by the belief that there is no such thing as a "right" to destroy wetlands merely for fun or convenience. Once again, Thanks for your efforts. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 8.*

**17-Aug-01  
Samuel H. Brown**

Comment: I am very much against closing the Tanana Flats area to air boats and 3/4 wheelers, which have had very little impact on the area. Although, I have observed military equipment and debris scattered all over the Flat. I feel it would be a good beginning for environmental clean up for the military to remove this equipment and debris. Thank you for your attention.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9.*

**17-Aug-01  
Steve Fortecny**

Comment: I fully support the proposed USARAK ORV access proposal and the new changes that will include airboats as ORVs, and their use only in the main river channels. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted.*

**17-Aug-01  
Toby and Bernie Hall**

Comment: My wife and I have lived in the Fairbanks area for over 9 years. We have been using the Tanana flats area as a recreation area for all those years. We are both very avid snow machiners and enjoy using the flats area very much during the "long" winter times. I really can't see any realistic use for this area for the army. I'm a retired Air Force senior enlisted person and I can't see any useful purpose for this to be any type of a training area. This area is a one of a kind and there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. With this in mind, why train in this area? The primary reason why the Army should reconsider this is the fact that they are a very important part of our community and they should look at the overall PR effect that this action will have on their

neighboring communities. I will be very honest with you, it will be devastating and you will be very hard pressed to enforce it. This is simply not a good move. Please reconsider this action. Thanks.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 5.*

**18-Aug-01  
Cindy Fabbri**

Comment: I support the Army in their decision to restrict airboats to river channels, to restrict summertime ORV use to upland areas, and to allow snowmachine use only when the ground is adequately frozen and snow-covered in the Tanana Flats. The vegetation should be protected from the damage caused by ORV use. Similarly, the wildlife, especially the endangered and threatened species, should be able to reside in the flats protected from the pollution, noise and disturbances caused by these vehicles. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**18-Aug-01  
Eric Jewkes**

Comment: This email is to express my complete opposition and disappointment to the Army's proposal to ban motor vehicles on the Tanana Flats. I have been hunting on the Tanana Flats for 20 years, all that time utilizing; 4-wheelers, track vehicles, Argos, and Air boats. I have been going to the same area for all these years and have not seen a degradation of the terrain over all that time. The impact of motorized hunting by a relative few people in such a large areas not significant enough to justify the ban. The military continually use motorize vehicles in that area as well as other areas. You are now telling the rest of the residents of Alaska they can not do the same. This is neither logical or in the best interest of positive relationships between the Army and the residents of Alaska. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8.*

**18-Aug-01  
Fran Mauer**

Comment: I fully support the proposed plan to limit airboats and other off-road vehicles from military lands in the Tanana Flats. This has been an issue long over due, and unfortunately, considerable damage has already been done by the use of these vehicles (creation of trails, habitat fragmentation, destruction of beaver dams, noise disturbance etc). It is also unfortunate that the users of these vehicles (a small minority) are extremely vocal (they make as much noise as their airboats). Your agency has basic land stewardship responsibilities that require correction of the abuses created by airboats and ATVs. The plan would allow access to the Flats for recreation by less disturbing means (small aircraft, boats and canoes) which is very appropriate. I encourage you to resist the barrage of objections from these destructive people and fulfill the responsibilities of taking care of the land, waters and wildlife of the Tanana Flats. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I commend you and your agency for taking this important step.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**18-Aug-01**

**John Carlson, Chair**

Comment: During the Fairbanks North Star Borough's Trails Advisory Commission meeting of August 14, 2001, the members voted to forward a letter to you through the Mayor's Office and the Borough Assembly. The commission is asking two questions: 1) What are the current environmental impacts to the area as a result of ORV use? 2) What are the limitations required by the military training within the wetlands during the summer months? Please forward responses to the commission through the FNSB Mayor's Office at: Mayor Rhonda Boyles Fairbanks North Star Borough P. O. Box 71267 Fairbanks, AK 99707-1267. Sincerely,

*Response: Information provided. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**18-Aug-01**

**Yoriko Freed**

Comment: I believe the plan to restrict airboats and ATVs on military lands in the Tanana Flats is long over due and am in full support of this action. Please stick by the original plan, and stop the destruction of habitat and disturbance of wildlife. Your plan goes a long way towards bringing the recreational uses of this area into a realm that is appropriate and will assure that the values of the Flats will remain for those who come after us to use and enjoy as well. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important initiative.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**19-Aug-01**

**Alan C. Jones**

Comment: I strongly protest the planned closure of the Flats to airboats and other off road vehicles. These Flats have been used by countless numbers of citizens, both military and non-military, for hunting, trapping, fishing and sight seeing. I myself have run a registered trapline near the Wood River and Wood River Buttes for over 15 years. I have spent countless enjoyable hours in the Flats in pursuit of Game and Fur Bearers. Off road vehicles have little or no impact on the Flats and are the only way a person can get around out there. Please reconsider this closure.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 8.*

**19-Aug-01**

**Chris Whisenant**

Comment: This letter is to support banning airboats on the Tanana Flats. I have hunted moose up Clear Creek for over thirty years by canoe. The last ten years the noise level from airboats has progressively gotten worse. When I first went up Clear Creek with my father, the only noise was from Warthogs doing bombing runs in the distance. I could still hear game crossing the creek or moving through the brush while I sat in a tree 80-100 feet above the ground. Now I have to strain to hear anything over the roar of the airboats. The roar lasts all day and even into the morning as they race through the brush scattering game everywhere. I have even been watching bull moose coming toward my tree only to have an airboat chase it off. They did not even know it was there. I would like to take my son and daughter hunting but the outdoor experience is gone. It is like hunting next to a freeway. Even with the modifications to make airboats quieter, they are still too loud. I understand that you may have

to compromise. If so, I would like to suggest that airboats be banned for three miles on both sides of Clear Creek and within three miles of the Blair Lakes.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**19-Aug-01**

**Eric Graves**

Comment: I urge you to ignore the emotional hyperbole and focus on the science on the issue regarding the use of airboats and other vehicles in the Tanana Flats. The airboats especially are damaging the flats at an alarming rate and there must be significant impact from the enormous noise these boats make. These boats are used by a relatively small number of people should not be allowed to continue using the flats. I have attached a report I found on the net that supports the research that the military has done there. Please do not cave into the political pressure on this issue. By the way I am a 46 year resident of Fairbanks and often travel the rivers in my homebuilt riverboat. Thanks,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**19-Aug-01**

**James E. Gibertoni**

Comment: This E-mail is formal complaint about the Armies recent attempt to put the Tanana Flats off-limits to ATV and Air Boats. For more years than I want to remember I have been hunting the Tanana Flats for moose every September on a four wheeler. I usually hunt the island between the Saljacket and the Tanana river. I have legally removed 12 moose from that area. I have also hunted the old winter trail that goes between the Bonnofield trail and Blair Lakes. I have spent over twenty five years out there Flying , and hunting. I have never even gone for a ride on a airboat. I have nothing against air boaters. As always I call in before heading out there, and upon return. I always make sure I have my state hunting license, Ft WW HTF card, Safty card, Boat registration, ATV military sticker reg., and state ATV Reg. I always leave my cell phone number with the FT WW personnel. I am a Civil Air Patrol mission pilot. In just the last year I have spent hundreds of flying hours training out there. I know of no other person in this community that has flown over, hunted, snow machine, and trapped this area more than I. Last week I spent two hours out there in an army Blackhawk helicopter. Why does the army want to shut this area down? If the Army has a valid reason for this then why not published it? What did we users do wrong here to receive this wrath from you people. I am not aware of any trashy or environmental impact from the recreational use. However, I can show you the exact location of trash and junk left out there (not in the impact zone) by the army. I can give you the locations of 29 automobiles, one cement mixer, one WWII B24 bomber, (119) 55 gallon drums, three fuel tanks off WWII P39 fighter planes, one military Fairchild #19 airplane, , 1ea. (8) hole stainless steel out house toilet seat, miles of wire, 3 towers and God knows how many tin cans form the Army. There is allot of junk out there and it is all from you folks not the hunters. Please keep in mind that the old winter trail to Blairs lakes was there before FT Wainwright existed. Why don't we work as a team and come to some kind of a compromise? Set up a committee and discuss this



issue. I would be more than happy to sit on that committee. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9.*

**19-Aug-01  
John M Wright**

Comment: Concerning the proposed closure of the military training areas south of Fairbanks, I am all in favor of limiting airboat and ATV use of that area. I have lived in Fairbanks off and on since 1969, and remember when the first airboats annoyed residents along the Chena River. In the late 70s we had one come down our slough at 11pm at night, get stuck, emit a long string of cuss words, and then eventually roar its way off into the distance. That is one of my reasons for favoring elimination of airboats. It disrupts hunting for almost everyone who uses the Tanana Rats. You can't call moose, or listen for moose" making noise, because of the roar of airboats. Their deafening noise carries for miles, and makes it impossible to hunt most mornings and evenings - when hunting should be at its best. Habitat destruction by ATVs and airboats is also a concern. You only have to look at Game Management Unit 13, in the Nelchina basin, to see what unrestricted ATV traffic can do. The country there is all marred by muddied trails in the tundra and wetlands. Airboats and ATVs should have been controlled from the start. I am glad you have taken this step to curtail their use now. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**19-Aug-01  
Rick Sanders**

Comment: I see once again the army is trying to heavy hand the residents of the interior by closing access to the Tanana Flats. What has happened to the "good neighbor policy" that I have heard past Wainwright commanders speak of? Itinerant military telling permanent residents that they cannot have either recreational or hunting access to historical use land is not the way to gain friends within a community. I am curious what kind of "training activity the army forseees in the swampy expanses of the flats. Humvees, susvees, tanks, and jeeps would easily be lost in the floating vegetation. Grunts would find very little firm footing during the summer months.. About the only kind of training I can think of is some sort of aerial practice w/ helicopters and the since a great deal of the swamp area lies within the flight path of Fairbanks International, I am sure that the FAA would have objections to that. In short, it seems that perhaps there are other motives to closing the area to hunting access. I believe that the army is getting greener than the uniforms indicate... If that is the case, I would suggest that the army should look for other communities to bully.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, and 5.*

**19-Aug-01  
Robert Canter**

Comment: Why close the Tanana Flats to the American People? We do still have rights! I am an avid hunter, not a sports hunter, but a hunter for food, as many Alaskans. Please do not close Tanana Flats. We have as much right to hunt there as anyone. Why does the government want to close it?

Just to take more rights away from the American people or what? My name is Robert Canter, I am a Vietnam Veteran. If you would please respond to my e-mail my address is [freespirt@skeeto.net](mailto:freespirt@skeeto.net) <<mailto:freespirt@skeeto.net>>. Thank you!

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**19-Aug-01  
Schreiber's**

Comment: Iam in 100% protest of the proposed closure.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**19-Aug-01  
Scott Gallegos**

Comment: This e-mail is to voice my opposition to the proposal to limit access to the Tanana flats. A quick glance at the map of the Fairbanks area shows the army to be in control of a big chunk of prime recreational and hunting ground. The army has allowed access to this area for many years airboaters have many trails in this area. The army also has a lot of hunters many of whom have four wheel A.T.V.s and some of them have airboats and boats. To close up this area to A.T.V.s would crowd the other hunting areas in the area. Please don't become the jealous landlord of the Fairbanks area. Thank you for your time.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 6.*

**20-Aug-01  
Bert McGuire**

Comment: I am writing in support of the Fort Wainwright proposal to limit airboats and off-road vehicles on the Tanana River area. We need to protect this fragile water environment. Please continue your present plans. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**20-Aug-01  
Ed Davis**

Comment: I use ORVs in my job, including air boats, snowmachines, four wheelers, etc. I know these vehicles have their place, however, I also recognize that there are many times and places that they should be banned or restricted. I have seen, for example, how airboats caused waterfowl eggs (in large numbers) to be killed/abandoned in the marshlands surrounding Robe Lake near Valdez. I have read the proposed restrictions, and I support them. I also read the Army's plan to expand training exercises, and of the hazard due to unexploded ordnance. I believe the Army should: 1) begin to eliminate the existing unexploded ordnance, and 2) refrain from training exercises which would create new unexploded ordnance, or adding hazardous chemicals associated with these explosives to the Tanana watershed. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**Florale McGuire**

Comment: I support your plan to restrict air boats and off-road vehicles in the Tanana Flats. They are very damaging to the environment, the animals and birds. Also they spoil the area with the terrible noise (the airboats) that they inflict on those that live on the Tanana River. This is very important, I'm glad you're going to stop these awful vehicles that destroy people's serenity along this beautiful river. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**Gordon Cooper**

Comment: I would like to register my opposition to further restrictions on hunting by four wheeler on the Tanana Flats. It appears arrogant and indicative of selfish motives, that the military would fail to consult the registered users before suggesting such a closure. All registered users, are required to provide our names and addresses annually to obtain the required safety permit. But it appears no attempt was made to contact us by mail, and I am still unable to find the website where the draft use document is supposedly located. How is this a reasonable public process? As I understand it, these lands are not actually owned by the military, if it proceeds towards complete closure I will work to have these lands removed from military control, cleaned up at military expense and returned to full public use. The military already has a record of treating these flats as its own private hunting preserve. Alaska resident civilian users are required to obtain individual permits and ORV permits for their 4 wheelers, and also to phone in each time for permission to gain access. Out of state military are allowed to hunt there at will without a even obtaining a hunting license. The so called "safety permit" process is designed to impede public without any useful purpose. I recently obtained my permit by visiting the MP office on post. They knew nothing about the existing closed areas and had absolutely no written information or maps available. It is evident that the military cares little about public safety, and simply interested in total control. There are already several large areas that are closed to hunting due to military activity; the Blair Lakes, Bear Creek and McDonald Creek areas. The military justifies these closures due to risks from unexpended ordinance. It is probably not in the public interest to allow the military to contaminate any more areas in this manner without first proving that they can clean up their mess. Civilian access and awareness helps safeguard against government/military abuse, perhaps that is the real reason they would like to keep us out. I have been hunting on these flats for ten years and strongly object to the lack of effort to obtain my input in this planning process. It indicates a lack of respect for the public interest in general and high handedness on the part of federal officials who regard this as their own private property. This situation warrants a review by our elected representatives and possibly the courts. I intend to pursue such a review. Please acknowledge receipt of my comments and provide the address of the website where your draft planning document is located. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**Jeff Ailing**

Comment: The proposed restrictions to the Tanana flats impede our ability as citizens to exercise our constitutional rights to liberty, life and pursuit of happiness. As our country ages so to does this experiment we refer to as a democracy. Restrictions which impede our ability to pursue liberty are the order of the day but represent the opposite of the basis of the American ideal. America is not about control and restrictions, it is about freedom. Please withdraw the Army's plans to place further restrictions on our use of the Tanana Flats. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**Jim Kam**

Comment: I support the proposed restrictions on airboats and ORVs in the Tanana Flats. This is a positive step which will offer some protection to vulnerable wetlands. Airboats during hunting season really represent an unfair access advantage. Such use, if it increases, would have disastrous effects on Alaska's game. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 7, and 8.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**John and Patty Warnick**

Comment: We strongly object to the closure of the Tanana Flats for civilian use, particularly the use of 4-wheelers, snow machines and airboats. We do use the Tanana Flats for hunting and recreational purposes.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**Joy Miller**

Comment: I understand that in the past few weeks a visiting General stated that the military wants to reserve this land for their exclusive use as a hunting ground. My parents, who owned a bush service here for 30 years (from 1947), remember seeing military helicopters illegally hunting moose for the bigwigs who came to visit many years ago. Though I doubt they could get away with that today, it would be unjust for the military to stop hunters from entering traditional hunting grounds, for whatever reason. Thank you for your consideration.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**Robert W. Grunditz**

Comment: I heartily agree with the Army's decision to propose the restriction of vehicle usage in the Tanana Flats area. I will be a commendable action and speaks well for the conscious of those in the position of making rational choices in regards to the treatment of our precious Alaskan environment! Thank you for your effort.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**Ryan Woodard**

Comment: This is a comment on the INRMP Information Paper. I would like to see less ORV traffic in the Tanana Flats area. Thank you,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**Sean McGuire**

Comment: Airboats are one of the most obnoxious inventions ever invented by man. The noise level is so high that it ruins the experience for everyone else. The stress on the poor wildlife must be immense and the shallow places they will damage the marsh. Please stand up for the wildlife and the integrity of the wetlands. The airboaters are very vocal but they are a tiny minority. The public wants to see a management formula that protects the land and the animals and airboats don't fit into that anyway. I support the Army plan to restrict the airboats and ORVs. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**SGT. Nordin**

Comment: When I joined the military in 1995, one of the main reasons I joined was I wanted to contribute to the freedoms of this country that I have enjoyed. But I see by the actions of the military in the closing of the Tanana Flats area to recreational activities that the greatest threat to our freedoms come not from any enemy foreign or domestic but by the very government I swore to protect. This false perception by governmental agencies that the land is there's to do with what they like is beyond my understanding. The "true" owners of this land, the people of this country should have the final say on what is and what is not done with the lands of this country. The only thing that will be achieved by the closure of the Tanana Flats area to the public, will be to further widen the gap between the American people and the government that is suppose to serve the people. I strongly oppose any closure or restrictions to recreational activities on the Tanana Flats area. I ask that you do what is right and not what is easy. I did not join the Army to serve my government, I joined to serve the people of this country, and any person that works for the government has this same mission. The freedom to use the very lands that make up this great country is one of our most fundamental and basic freedoms, so please do not help to erode our freedom.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**20-Aug-01**  
**Todd Boyce**

Comment: I am very concerned about any plan to restrict access to this area. To date I have been unable to review the proposed document describing the proposed closure. When I have tried to view it at the website listed in the newspaper, it did not work. I believe there needs to be much more public discussion on this issue before any action is taken. Perhaps a concise press release listing the proposed changes would help get the word out. I will continue to attempt to review a copy of the proposal.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**21-Aug-01**  
**David J. Miller**

Comment: I am 100% behind the proposed ORV restrictions as proposed in the 2002 - 2006 INRMP. I have hunted in the Tanana flats continuously for the last 20 years, and the volume of ORV traffic has dramatically increased in recent years as the air boats have worn out their welcome in other places. I think air boats and other ORVs are excellent vehicles when used for access to otherwise hard to reach areas but most people use them as mobile hunting platforms increasing their impact on the fragile environment exponentially by logging countless unnecessary hours cruising around in search of game. The proposal to limit travel to established trails would still allow access while at the same time encouraging more people to get off their ORVs and participate in a fair chase hunting experience. I would not be upset if I never heard another air boat or orv while out on the flats, but the fact is they make alot of the flats accessible for different activities. The proposal to limit their impact to designated trails is the best compromise to this situation. The people who are up in arms over this issue are very organized and well funded. The people who are in favor are not, but if you ask any group of Fairbanks people who have spent any time at all on the flats there will be several who have a very negative opinion of orv use with air boats being singled out for the harshest criticism. Thanks for taking the time to read my opinion. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**21-Aug-01**  
**David Kendrick**

Comment: I want to protest the recommended closure of the Tanana Flats to motorized use. Please reconsider your position! I recently learned that you are considering closing this section of land without consideration to the users of this area. I am a regular user of the Tanana Flats. In September I hunt in the swamps and on the trails by ATV and air boat. In the winter I snow machine out on the flats. There is no other way to access the Tanana Flats without ATVs, air boats and snow machines.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 10.*

**21-Aug-01**  
**Denise K. Kendrick**

Comment: From the time that I was a young child I can remember stories of hunters that hunted in the area know as the Tanana Flats. It is indeed the most important area for the evening or weekend Hunter, (those that can not afford to take time off or away from family and work to help put the yearly meat on the table). For Hunters in the Fairbanks area, this has always been the place to hunt. So for many, without this area open to hunt in, it will definitely be a hardship on the weekend hunter and their families. I, for one would like to encourage the powers that be, to keep the area open. Please from the family of Eight Hungry Mouths.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

21-Aug-01

Gerald A. Richards

Comment: I previously wrote to thank you for extending the period for public comment regarding the proposed INRMP for 2002 through 2006. I would again like to express my thanks for allowing the public a fair chance to respond to the issues once they were brought to their attention. I own and operate an airboat, which I use for hunting, sightseeing, bird watching, and other related outdoor recreational activities. We frequently use the Tanana Flats area from June thru the end of September. We also use the Tanana Flats area in the winter for trapping and recreational snow machining. This area is in fact used by thousands of Fairbanks North Star Borough citizens from all facets of life as a prime outdoor recreation area. I strongly object to the current proposed wording in the INRMP as it relates to the restrictions of ORVs in the Tanana Flats Training Area on page 183 of the proposal and as further described in Figure 6-1 a. In reviewing Figure 6-1 a, Outdoor Recreation Areas of Fort Wainwright, it occurred to me that the Alpha and Blair Lakes Impact areas as designated on the map do not accurately reflect the buffer areas, which skirt the perimeter of the current Impact areas. ORVs including airboats are currently prohibited from entering the buffer areas, so there is a much larger area that is currently not being used as a recreation area than the map depicts. No one is arguing the point or trying to gain access to these areas. That would not be wise for safety reasons. I would recommend the Figure in 6-1 a be modified to show the buffer zones also as restricted areas. The rest of the area is not currently being used for training in the summer months and should be available for use by the citizens. The INRMP is an important document, but I question the true purpose and cost benefits. Is it really meant to lock up the lands so they cannot be used? Also, there are many areas of the INRMP that seem to me to be contradictory. For instance, one of the goals of the INRMP is to provide quality of life for the Fort Wainwright community and the general public through development of high quality natural resource-based recreational opportunities. We have high quality recreational opportunities in the Tanana Flats Training Area now. Restricting access will not improve recreation, it will diminish it. Compliance with Laws and Regulations is another area that I see as very contradictory. The Sikes Act mandates that the "Secretaries of military departments shall carry out the program required by this subsection to provide for the conservation and rehabilitation of natural resources, which shall include hunting, fishing, trapping and non-consumptive use; and subject to the safety requirements and military security." There is nothing in the proposal that even remotely suggests that the use of the Tanana Flats during the summer months has ever conflicted with military training missions. Likewise there is nothing to suggest that any damage has been done from civilian use over the last 40 years, which is approximately how long the land has been accessed by airboats. A common misunderstanding of airboats is that they damage the environment. In fact, the airboat is the least intrusive of all ORVs. It has the lowest pounds per square inch of pressure applied to the surface area of any of the ORVs by many times. Airboats skim over the top of the surface, they do not dig ruts or holes or get stuck like many of the military vehicles do when they attempt to maneuver in the Tanana Flats Area. The airboats biggest form of pollution is the noise they make. However, this has improved considerably over the years and continues to get better as multiple props are added, carbon fiber props are now

common on most airboats and the most recent innovation of counter rotating props appears to be another very promising improvement. Restricting the use of airboats to some very small streams and tributaries is inviting an accident and forces other recreational people to be more exposed to our noise pollution. The Tanana Flats Training Area is in many respects very similar to the Everglades. Airboats have been used in the Everglades since the 1930's and their use is still permitted after 70 years. There have been many studies done of Airboat use in the Everglades and there appears to be one common theme: Of the various off road vehicles tested, the airboat produced the least severe impacts. The primary reasons for this are that the boats contact with the ground surface as it skims across the top is minimal, (the surface pressure of an airboat is approximately 14 lbs per square foot, while the ground pressure of a foot on a person walking is approximately 300 lbs per square foot), there is an absence of trail widening and it does not significantly disturb the soil. These statistics were provided as part of a study of airboat use in the Tanana Flats completed in 1990 for the Army. The study was done 10 years ago and at that time they were unable to determine any detrimental effects to the wetlands, the large wildlife or the waterfowl. Now 11 years later, we commonly see swans, cranes, eagles, owls and a myriad of other birds, animals and of course lots of moose. Last year approximately 650 moose were harvested from game management unit 20A, which includes the entire Tanana Flats Training Area as well an area of similar size to the West of the Wood River. Since the density of hunters is higher in the Tanana Flats Training Area I would estimate the number of moose harvested there last year was probably as high as 400. That's a lot of meat for the tables in Fairbanks. If ORV access is restricted as proposed, many of these hunters will undoubtedly move to other areas such as the Salcha River, the Goodpasture, the Clearwater, etc. The additional hunting pressure on these areas will reduce the quality and success ratio of other hunters that historically use these areas. The "Federal Land Policy And Management Act of 1976" requires the BLM to develop, maintain and when appropriate revise land use plans. The INRMP states that the objective of BLM's land use planning is to ensure that public lands are managed under principles of multiple use and sustained yield. The Flats do not include any endangered species of plants or wildlife. There is no evidence that Airboat use in the Flats over the 10 last 40 years has had any detrimental effects on plants or wildlife. Since Airboats and ORVs are the only feasible means to access these areas, the proposed ban should not be implemented. The State of Alaska is committed to providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities. In 1999, Governor Knowles adopted a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan entitled "Alaska's Outdoor Legacy". Of people surveyed, 92% responded that high quality outdoor recreation opportunities are important to their lifestyle. To me that means "That's why we live here!" I also feel I must comment on the estimated \$3,000,000 cost per year of implementing the INMRP. That's over 15 million dollars over the course of the five years covered by the INMRP. Can't we find a better use of those funds, like cleaning up other parts of the Training Areas that have been negatively impacted by the military's use? Appendix D of the INRMP has not been present in the copies that I have reviewed. Appendix D is the Management Action Plans To Support the INMRP. I would like to reserve any other future comments related to this section after it becomes available. Could you please e-mail me a copy of Appendix D as soon as it is completed? As I



previously pointed out, there are many positive items addressed in the INMRP, however there are also many statements made, some of which in my opinion are incorrect. An example of this is the Summary paragraph on page 5 where it states that the INMRP “will improve Fort Wainwright’s relationship with the public”. I believe that if you implement this INMRP as it is currently proposed, you will do just the opposite. I believe you will seriously strain Fort Wainwright’s relationship with the public! Our community relationship with Fort Wainwright has always been very strong in the past. Please reconsider the effects of the proposed restrictions on the Tanana Flats Training Area. I would like to thank you for taking the time to review my comments and concerns and to give consideration to removing the proposed restrictions on ORVs, and most particularly Airboat use in the Tanana Flats Training Area. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**21-Aug-01  
Greg Turner**

Comment: My name is Greg Turner from Juneau, Alaska. My son, Zach, and I have used and hope to continue to use the Milary reservation south of Fairbanks to hunt moose each year. We need our airboat for safe and dependable transportation. We hope that our traditional use of this area will continue and see know reason why this area should be closed to airboats. I’m sure it has been pointed out by others that airboats cause no damage to the wetlands. We hope our airboat use will continue as it has in the past. If airboats are forced to stay on the main waterways the number of moose that are taken will decline which is one thing Fish and Game doesn’t want to happen. Please keep this area open to airboats as it has always been. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8.*

**21-Aug-01  
John K. Petersen**

Comment: I support the proposed changes to the Ft. Wainwright Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan. My primary concern with Off Road Vehicles on Ft. Wainwright is with airboats. I have not hunted on military land for the last fifteen years because the noise from airboats interfered with my ability to call moose. Problems with airboats are not limited to Ft. Wainwright. The State of Alaska has banned airboats for moose hunting in the Nenana Controlled Use area and the Minto Flats. I believe they are totally restricted from the Palmer Hay Flats outside of Anchorage and they are restricted from same day hunting on the Copper River Delta. Airboat complaints generally fall into three separate categories. The first is that they are very noisy, the second is that they give operators an unfair even unethical advantage while hunting and the third is that they adversely affect wetland habitat. I will briefly elaborate on these three complaints below. The problem of airboat noise is very severe. According to airboat salesman, Rodger Redfern, some airboats generate up to 135 dB at 50 feet. To put this in perspective, the FAA is reducing public exposure to aircraft noise to below the 65 dB level. It seems ironic that the potential to be exposed to harmful noise levels is greater while hunting moose in the Alaska wilderness than it is living

under the approach to a major jet airport. One evening while sitting in hunting camp around the fire and watching the stars, an airboat went past camp with headlights blazing. The man in the front seat had his rifle in one hand and a can of beer in the other. After we heard them go another few turns in the creek, we heard him start shooting. After the shooting was done, the motor cut. My experience is not uncommon. There may be ethical airboat hunters out there, but I haven’t met any. Because airboaters drive around to run down moose and shoot them, they seem to drive the moose away from the creeks into heavy brush. This makes it very difficult for others to hunt in a traditional spot and stalk manner. Finally, anyone who flies over the Tanana Flats will quickly notice the numerous trails that airboats have made across the wetlands. These trails may be changing the drainage rates and consequently lowering water levels. In the Boy Scouts I was taught to leave no trace while in the wilderness, it is obvious to me that airboat users were not Boy Scouts when I see the damage that airboat users leave behind. Finally, I think it makes perfect sense to hold the public to the same standards that the military has to meet when utilizing the Flats. Which means no access using off road vehicles when the Flats are unfrozen. I also think that this plan is more favorable to airboats than what the State did in the Minto Flats and the Nenana Controlled Use areas. This plan does not ban airboats, it only restricts them to the water like any other boat. Thank you for considering my comments. Sincerely yours.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**21-Aug-01  
Laurel & George (Ed) McLaughlin**

Comment: We agree that airboats and off road vehicles should NOT be allowed on the Tanana Flats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**21-Aug-01  
No Name**

Comment: Just an opinion. To the editor: There are two recent news items I’d like to comment on. The first regards the military attempt to close the Tanana Flats to hunting; the second is the issue of roadside memorials. Closing the Flats to hunters will negatively affect many who feed their families with wild game. Hunters displaced will be forced to move where others hunt, creating less safe, more competitive conditions. Ultimately, it will create new grudges against local military personnel and nobody needs that. I already see accusations by hunters who believe GIs are responsible, wanting their own private hunting grounds (I believe the average GI isn’t responsible and closed hunting means even they cannot hunt). Harmony between military personnel and civilians is worth promoting and maintaining. In short, closing the Flats to hunting is a bad idea for many reasons, and I hope the military leaders will see this.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 7.*

**21-Aug-01  
No Name**

Comment: Flats ban. To the editor: I am not an airboater, nor do I own a four-wheeler, yet I feel the

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**21-Aug-01**

**Phil Wildfang**

Comment: Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the Army's proposed limits on air boats and off the road vehicles in the Tanana Flats. I support the Army's proposal simply because it seems to be reasonable and in the best interests of our wetlands. I am a user of the Flats and enjoy boating, fishing, hiking, skiing and snowmachining in and around the area. Your proposed rules will do nothing but enhance those experiences for those who value the land, its wildlife and vegetation. Restricting machinery to certain times and areas in sensitive habitat where the least amount of damage will be done, is a responsible step forward in land stewardship. Thank you,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8/21/2001**

**Robert Pasquan**

Comment: I was greatly disturbed by hearing about the proposed restrictions on airboats and ORVs in the Tanana Flats. This has been traditionally used for decades by hunters, fisherman and recreational users. I do not fully understand this proposal. I live in Southeast Alaska and use these flats for hunting and fishing each year along with several other airboat enthusiasts, my though on this subject is how can Fish and Game manage the moose population in the Tanana Flats if you can't have access to the area? I whole heartedly agree with the Interior Alaska Airboat Association that the land be returned to the State as a swap for other lands and let the State of Alaska manage this land properly. Thank you for your time on this matter,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 7.*

**21-Aug-01**

**RON ROUTH**

Comment: HELLO MY NAME IS RON ROUTH AND I AM E MAILING YOU TO LET YOU AND THE ARMY KNOW I AM OPPOSED TO THE ARMY CLOSING THE TANNANA FLATS TO ORV AS WELL AS AIR BOATS, FOR THE PURPOSE OF HUNTING FISHING AN OUTDOOR RECREATION. THIS RECENT MOVE CONCERNS ME AS A CITIZEN AND THE LARGEST AIR AND JET BOAT DEALER IB THE STATE ,SO I HAVE A DUAL PURPOSE FOR E MAILING YOU MY COMMENT. I FEEL THIS WILL EFFECT MY FAMILY IN TWO WAYS ,ONE IS LOSS OF SALES OF NEW AND USED BOATS,IT ALREADY HAS ON THE AIRBOAT SIDE. AND THE OTHER IS MY FAMILIES SOURCE OD FOOD AND RECREATION. RECENTLY I SOLD A BOAT TO MIKE SALZMAN WHO IS HANDICAPED FROM THE CHEST DOWN BY THE WAY,MIKE LOVES TO HUNT OUT IN THE FLATS BECAUSE OF IT CLOSENESS TO PEOPLE AND HELP IF NEEDED. MIKES BOAT IS ALL HAND CONTROLLED AND HE CAN RUN ,UNLOAD AND RELOAD BY HIM SELF. MIKE IS VERY INDEPENDENT AND IS UP SET THAT THE ARMY IS NOW TRYING TO TAKE AWAY ONE OF THE THINGS HE LOVES TO DO. I AM SURE YOU WILL GET TO MET HIM AND YOU WILL BE HEARING FROM

HIM AND AS WELL AS ACCESS ALASKA, REMBER HE IS HANDICAPPED AND HIS ONLY FORM OF TRANSPORTATION IS AIR BOAT OR SNOWMACHINE FOR OUTDOOR FUN AND FOOD.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**21-Aug-01**

**Thayne Andersen**

Comment: Please add my name to those who would like to eradicate noisy airboats from the earth, not just the Tanana flats. Their noise is totally unacceptable.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**22-Aug-01**

**CHARLES HORVATH**

Comment: I am worried about airboaters rights in the Tanana flats, for a couple of user groups to be picked out for elimination from using a resource like the tanana flats to feed there family in the winter months ahead, I CANNOT SUPPORT THIS ONE BIT!!!! I did my tour of duty on this base in the early 80s. . I trained in the tanana flats as a recon scout. for the last 20+ years I have hunted and fished these swamps with a passion ! Airboating allows young and old and disabled persons a chance to see a part of Alaska seen no other way . As to some of us it is a way to hunt and fish the backcountry of Alaska ,So as I see it ,I can serve my country apnd this land ,but to share this with land and its riches with other Alaskans by airboat is wrong. this is not why I served my country to be singled out add eliminated from the food chain !!!!!!!the area west of clear creek does not get used for training personal during the summer months, its swamp .last time I checked it;s still state land lease to the federal government for the us army. Alaska constitution said all its fish and game belongs equally to all its people and will be manage in a way for sustain harvest!!!! what you are doing to a large part of Fairbanks is against our constitution AND I WILL NOT SUPPORT IT ONE BIT!!!!!!

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.*

**22-Aug-01**

**Dave Lacey**

Comment: I am writing in strong support of your proposal to limit the use of airboats and 4 wheelers on the Tanana Flats. I live on the Tanana River next to the Flats. I have to put up with the terroristic noise of the airboats 24 7. They are something else. I don't know what else to say about a machine that makes that much noise. Do not be any where near them if you are praying or meditating. Even in my yard a half mile away one can not carry on a normal conversation with one of them operating. Their noise pollution is a health hazard. I believe in letting people do their own thing as long as they do not negatively impact someone else. That is not the case with airboats. They are not traditional or natural. They are a toy for decadent people who do not care who or what they harm. They are not needed for access in the Tanana Flats for hunting. People have hunted in the Tanana Flats for generations without airboats. Most people now hunt there perfectly well without an airboat. In fact most of the other hunters do not like the airboats because they make it hard to

hunt the traditional way calling and stalking game because of their noise pollution. If their noise pollution affects humans so intensely then I can only imagine what it does to the flora and fauna in the Flats. It has to put a tremendous stress on them. There is enough stress in all of our lives without adding unnecessary stress in the form of airboats romping everywhere. I know that airboats have affected the ecosystem there in other negative ways too by plowing through the fens and creating waterways that should not be there. To sum up, airboats and 4 wheelers are not traditional and are not needed for access into the Flats. They are very destructive to the ecosystem there. You have no other alternative than to restrict them in order to do your job of protecting the ecosystem there as you are charged to do. Thank you,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**22-Aug-01**

**Dean Allen**

Comment: I would like to express my concern over the proposed ban by the military. I view this as an aggressive move by the army that is uncharacteristic of the military. In the past the relationship between the public and the military concerning issues of this nature has been very good so I am surprised to see this ban coming up. For the Federal Government to take this position indicates that the leadership on Wainwright has become very "green" and I would expect further bans of public use to follow. My belief is that the military is WAY out of line on this issue and should encourage public use instead. I would be very interested to know where this idea of a ban came from and what prompted it. It's all very suspicious to me. I find it very hard to believe that there is any science or logical reason for a ban and suspect that politics is the only reason for it. Please count me as a voice against any sort of access ban. Thank You.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**22-Aug-01**

**Diane E. Jewkes**

Comment: I strongly object to the proposed ban of ORVs and airboats on the Tanana Flats. I am a registered voter, mother of 2 children that live, work and vote in the FNSB, and a 10 year hunter on the Tanana Flats who respects the land.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8/22/2001**

**Dottie Leonard**

Comment: I do not agree with the Army's Integrated Natural Resource Plan for 1998-2001 which banned the use of off road vehicles and airboats from the Tanana Flats. The public was not even informed of this significant management change. I do not agree with the current Draft Integrated Natural Resource Plan for 2002-2006 that continues to ban off road vehicles and airboats from the Tanana Flats. The military does not even use the area that I use for outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing. My only access is with these vehicles that the public has traditionally used for over 40 years. The Army needs to allow traditional access to the Tanana Flats. The Army and the citizens of the Fairbanks area need to live and work together in harmony as we have in the past.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 5.*

**22-Aug-01**

**James R. Quinn**

Comment: I wish to express my opposition to the ludicrous idea of banning airboats and ATVs from the Army's lands. A few of the reasons why I feel this way follow: 1). The trappers use ATV to clear their trap lines in summer. 2). Moose hunters use both of them for access to the state's 20A hunting area. Therefore, banning them would only allow pilots access into the central sections of 20A. 3). Packing moose is nearly impossible for many hunters. I am one of them. Being a disabled veteran, the elimination of these means to hunt would end it for me. There are at least 20 hunters I know who are disabled vets who rely on airboats and ATVs to hunt. I believe it was in the 70s that the Army tried to restrict hunting on their land to just military personnel. I will support the same state actions this time if this ban comes to fruition. If I remember correctly, the state was going to eliminate all special military licenses and hunts. Any military member would have to be in state for a year, change their home of record to AK, and become a resident or pay the nonresident fees. Since this ban would discriminate against all but those in the best physical shape, I would join and support legal remedies. Please do not put this plan into effect.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**22-Aug-01**

**Jim Hill**

Comment: I would like to express my objection to the proposed ban on the use of airboats and off road vehicles in the Tanana Flats by the Military. It has long been established that airboats can utilize this area without damage to the vegetation. It is the only logical way to hunt that area and it certainly is an area that needs to be hunted to keep the moose population stable. Surely proposed restrictions will be tossed around from time to time when it seems like the area is being impacted due to harsh winters or other problems, but to just outright close the area to airboats seems rather extreme. I hope through public comment and good judgment that this proposal will be cancelled.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 7.*

**22-Aug-01**

**Leonard E. Jewkes**

Comment: I strongly object to the proposed ban of ORVs and airboats on the Tanana Flats. I am a Veteran of the US Air Force, a retired employee of Alaska Railroad, a current FNSB employee, a registered voter, father of 2 children that live, work and vote in the FNSB, and a 30 year hunter on the Tanana Flats who respects the land.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**22-Aug-01**

**Lynn E. Levengood, Esq.**

Comment: I strenuously object to and oppose any additional restrictions on the historical use of public lands in and around Fairbanks that is currently managed by your agency. I have been using these lands for nearly thirty years without any problem. I am also aware of an environmental impact study that was conducted regarding airboats. This study could not substantiate any evidence of any problems associated with airboat use regarding public lands, waters or wildlife. Thousands of Fairbanks, Fort Wainwright, Eielson Air Force Base, and Delta Junction residents have historically and currently utilized these lands to provide sustenance for their families each year. Hundreds of thousands of man hours of successful recreational public use of these lands currently takes place, which is now at risk due to some environmental extremist position being advocated by the ignorant and uninformed. The U.S. Government Armed Forces could not withstand the hostile public environment and adverse community relations which would occur instantly if these lands were closed to citizen use by historic access means. The adverse impact of such a decision will be attributed to military service members who will become instantly unwelcome in our community. Moreover, the displacement of these thousands of users into the Livengood, Fort Yukon, and other more rural areas of Alaska will only cause further disharmony with rural Alaskans. The at issue area is cross hatched with myriad amounts of long established trails and roads. Historically, Fort Wainwright installed an ice bridge each year to allow heavy vehicle access across the Tanana River. There are currently many maps which show these historic trails and survey lines which are used by Alaskans. I personally had a trap line in this area for five years, and know of two trappers that have continuously trapped this area for over thirty years each (R. Long, P. Buist). I strenuously object to any closure or ORV/airboat restrictions. All the reasons I've heard about are based on speculation, conjecture, hearsay, misinformation, and outright false information. The only study that has been conducted regarding airboat use in this area definitively determined that there was no problem. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**22-Aug-01**

**Mark Gudschinsky**

Comment: I am not an air boater, nor do I own a four-wheeler yet I feel the proposed ban is a poor idea indeed. The proposed regulations would effectively ban public use from all but very limited portions of the area. This exclusion changes public use that has gone on throughout the last century and undoubtedly much longer. In the interior we love our Flats. And our is the correct term. There is a mood in this area and the State of Alaska that the land is ours. We don't mind the military using some land and we realize that a portion may need to be restricted. But keep the restricted areas to those closely around the bases and other facilities and to remote areas that the public has not traditionally used. The proposed ban has the affect of taking land that we in the Interior have always considered ours. The mood that the proposed regulations is fostering is if you're not going to be a good neighbor and share the land, give it back and we will manage it ourselves. Besides you have plenty more. The best public relations decision and good neighbor policy would

be to establish a long-term open public access policy for the area. You would be local heroes and the military would avoid a long-term messy public and political fight.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, and 8.*

**22-Aug-01**

**Michael C. Kramer**

Comment: I contacted you last year on behalf of the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee. I advised that our chief concern re: the proposed update to the management plan not contain any access restrictions. We invited you to our meeting to address these concerns. You sent another person from your office who deflected all concerns that this plan would be used to push through restrictions on access to the fish and game resources of the flats. I was quite surprised to learn that the plan now calls for access restrictions. I appreciate you have extended the comment period in light of the fact that no one was really advised the Army was considering such an enormous restriction on historic and traditional use of the flats. I appreciate the flats represent an important training area for the Army. For decades, the army's training mission and civilian sportsman have been able to share the flats in a mutually beneficial manner. Unless and until the Army can prove that Airboats and ORVs represent a threat to the continued viability of the army's training program, I am adamantly opposed to any civilian access restriction. The community of Fairbanks has long supported the Army's presence. I suspect that historic support will diminish considerably if the Army effectively bans access to a popular recreation area without a bonafide military justification. The ban appears to be a hastily conceived knee jerk reaction by some people who don't like Airboats. Such decisions seldom receive public support. I am chagrined that neither you nor your associate gave me or the Advisory Committee any indication you were considering an Airboat ban last spring when we specifically asked you about any intentions you had in that regard or at least made the recommendations more public. You had to have known the public furor you would be creating by proposing this ban. I urge you to remove any language restricting traditional civilian access to the flats from the plan.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 8, and 10.*

**22-Aug-01**

**No Name**

Comment: I am writing in response to the proposed ban on airboats, and other motorized vehicles, in the area south of Fairbanks known as the Tanana Flats. I have several concerns about this ban. Not the least of which is the reasoning behind such a move. My concerns are as follows: This area has been used by the local residents for well over 30 years for many recreational and economic purposes. It is a favorite spot for snowmachiners and dogmushers in the winter. It is also used by area trappers for their livelihood. In the summer it is used for airboaters for recreation as well as the main area for moose hunting for that user group. It is a place where all of these user groups have been welcome and do not have the dangers of road traffic as well as being an area where these groups are not disturbing neighborhoods with noise. Some of these groups, especially the airboaters, have very little options for other areas close to town that do not



impact other user groups. If the Army is concerned about the environmental impact these user groups have my answer to that is two-fold. Number one, there have been numerous studies done that have shown the impact on the area to be minimal. I believe the facts speak for themselves in that the impact has shown to be minimal after over 30 years of use by these groups. If the Army is considering using this area for training exercises will they not then be impacting this area a lot more than the user groups have done in the last 30 years? Also, just how much training can be done in this area when it will have a major electric line running right through it, as well as it's proximity to local air traffic patterns? I cannot believe that the Army does not have any other swamp or marsh land, on all the land it has control over, that it can use for training. Land that will not have such a negative impact on the local residents.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, and 8.*

**22-Aug-01  
Richard Flanders**

Comment: This plan the army has to restrict public use of the Tanana Flats has to be the stupidest PR move the army has ever made in Interior Alaska. Surely you must have predicted the public outcry that would result. And this is coming from someone who hates airboats and has little use for recreational snowmachiners. I don't think you can win this one and I hope you lose and get your hands slapped in the process. Unless I'm missing something here, it seems that to try to restrict such an area that is so heavily used by the public and adjacent to a growing city like Fairbanks seems like nothing more than just plain stupidity. It's just too accessible and well suited for the use it gets to deny that use in the name of some war games and operations. As far as I'm concerned you should relinquish any and all control you have on the area and go somewhere else for your war games. I'm not at all anti-military but Fairbanks is already surrounded by too much of it and I don't think the army should be attempting to limit the public in this manner. You will turn a lot of citizens against you with a move like this.... and you know better than I do I'm sure that you don't need that. I suggest you cut your losses and drop this attempt and apologize profusely as you do it.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 5.*

**22-Aug-01  
Ronald L. Smith**

Comment: Thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on the proposed closure. I support, in the strongest possible terms, any and all proposals to ban the use of airboats in the Tanana River Valley and, indeed, anywhere in the state of Alaska. These machines are the most obnoxious and their operators are the most insensitive people on this planet. If we drove down the street in any vehicle that made as much noise as an airboat we would be arrested and jailed for creating a public disturbance. We live at the south end of Chena Ridge, facing the Tanana River. The river is about 3/4 mile from us. When an airboat passes by, we cannot hold a conversation out on our deck. Even inside our home the noise level is higher than it ever gets with road traffic on our road. I didn't come to Alaska to have my voice drowned out by airboats while I'm sitting in my own home. There is also

the matter of harrasing animals from airboats. It is beyond rational thought to believe that birds and mammals in the Tanana Flats are unaffected by airboat noise. Further, while flying over the Tanana Flats last fall, I saw five instances in which airboat "trails," the flattened vegetation produced by the passage of an airboat, led to beaver dams. Those five beaver dams had been partially disassembled so that the airboat could get past them. I realize that you will get a lot of heated comment in opposition to the proposed ban on airboats but there are many in this community who would like to see these ridiculous, obscene, obnoxious, destructive machines purged from the community. Again, I strongly urge that the ban be adopted. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**22-Aug-01  
Tom Ramsey**

Comment: I am writing to express my opinion about the proposed closure of Military property in the Tanana Flats to civilian motorized vehicles. I oppose any closure or further restrictions. The Fairbanks recreational community has used this area on a continuous basis for many decades. It is a traditional hunting and snowmachining area for local sportsmen. Surely there is some way we can share the use of this area. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**23-Aug-01  
Habitat and Restoration Division, DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH AND GAME, HABITAT & RESTORATION  
DIVISION**

Comment: RE: Fort Wainwright Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan 2002-2006. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Habitat and Restoration Division (in consultation with Wildlife Conservation and Sport Fish divisions) submitted "general" comments on the Fort Wainwright Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) on June 14, 2001. Due to public concerns over the INRMP's proposed restrictions on off-road vehicle (ORV) use, particularly airboat restrictions, we would like to clarify our position with the following supplemental comments.

The Army's 1989/90 survey of the Tanana Flats Training Area documented wetlands impact associated with airboat use. Casual observation while flying over the flats also reveals the presence of new water channels that have been formed by airboats operating in wet non-stream areas. Definitive studies have not been conducted to evaluate what cumulative and secondary effects, if any, these changes to surface hydrology have on the Tanana Flats and its wetland habitats.

We understand that the Army's Section 404 Wetlands Permit (2000 to 2004) limits wetland impacts to 40 acres annually from all activities on Fort Wainwright, including construction, training, maneuvers, and public recreational use. To preserve training opportunities for the Army's primary military mission, the INRMP proposes to limit wetland impacts from non-military public recreation activities. Specific restrictions include prohibiting summer ATV use in wetlands except for specified ATV trail corridors and restricting airboats to the active channel of specified

interconnected rivers, streams and sloughs. Airboat use out of the active channel (wetlands, fens) would be prohibited.

As outlined in the ADF&G and Army's 1986 "Cooperative Agreement for Management of Fish and Wildlife Resources on Army Lands in Alaska" (a precursor to the INRMP), our primary objective is to maximize public recreation, hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities within the military reservation consistent with military requirements, sound conservation, and habitat protection. While the department normally does not endorse access restrictions unless there is a public or resource conservation interest, we recognize that the Army is obligated under its Section 404 Wetlands Permit to carefully control all types of wetland impacts within the military withdrawal. The proposed access restrictions are intended as a balance between minimizing wetland impacts from recreational activities while maximizing opportunity for hunting, fishing, and trapping within the withdrawal. We recognize that absent some restrictions, the Army could lose its opportunity to conduct military training exercises. Should that occur, the Army could be forced to impose even further restrictions on public hunting, fishing, and trapping within the military withdrawal. The Wildlife Conservation Division states the proposed ORV restrictions will not significantly impact their management goals for the flats or hunter success rates overall. The Sport Fish Division states that there is little game fish utilization in areas of the Tanana Flats that are not directly connected to river systems. Fishing that does occur in the area within the streams and sloughs will remain open to public access. Angling opportunity should not be impacted (negatively or beneficially) by the proposed access restrictions.

At the regional level, ADF&G agrees that the draft management plan adequately balances military mission, habitat protection, and public use of the military withdrawal. While imposing access restrictions is rarely popular, we will not oppose it provided that the INRMP overall maximizes opportunities for public hunting, fishing, and trapping and that different user groups with similar potential for impacting wetlands are treated equally. Specifically, the draft plan appears more restrictive for airboat users than for other boaters. The INRMP should be amended to provide access opportunities for airboats to the same waterbodies that will remain open to other watercraft. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Mac McLean (459-7281) or Nancy Ihlenfeldt (459-7287). Thank you. Sincerely,

*Response: Comments noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3. Recreational access has been clarified to indicate no difference between airboats and other motorized watercraft.*

**23-Aug-01  
Bill Swift**

Comment: My family of five voters is completely against the proposed changes in access to the Tanana flats. The military has done more damage to the area than what will ever be done in the future by the off road vehicles they are trying to eliminate. If the military needs to have an area that won't get any off road vehicle traffic they should acquire more from another part of the state that isn't used by the public in this fashion. Go to one of the parks. US military by definition is to serve the public citizens. Try getting along with the Alaskans that have supported you over the past century. If the military attitude is not to share the land with other Alaskan users then we don't need the military here. This is a total disrespect for the traditional Alaskan way of life.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**23-Aug-01  
Bruce Pitcher**

Comment: I received this e-mail address from a friend who said you were requesting comments on restrictions that "someone" is proposing to put on the Tanana Flats. I would like to know who that someone is in detail and exactly what restrictions that are proposed and why. It would be difficult to comment without that information. I have been an Alaska resident since 1956 and have enjoyed the freedoms that our state has to offer for many years. I have seen a lot of "progress", as it is touted by our community leaders, but I have seen little good come from any of it. The Trans Alaska Pipeline, (more people and inflated gas prices), the Shopping Malls in which you can find absolutely nothing of use to anyone, unless you have a need for a teen with purple hair and the dramatic increase in government controls and property taxes. Please send me a note and let me know what you folks are up to and I will be happy to comment. This community has been good to the Military for a lot of years and I certainly hope that relationship will continue.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**23-Aug-01  
Chad Trabant**

Comment: As an Alaskan born and raised in Fairbanks, I support more limitation of airboat use; especially in the Fairbanks and Tanana flats regions.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**23-Aug-01  
Charles Derrick**

Comment: I am opposed to the restrictions on ORVs, airboats, and possible restrictions for snowmachine use on military land in the Tanana Flats as is proposed in your new plan. If the military is interested in keeping good relations with the Fairbanks community then they best send whoever came up with this idea back to whatever anti hunting or protectionist organization they grew out of. Many Fairbanksans access the Flats by boat, orv, airboat or whatever means to fill their freezers in the fall. Sounds to me like you want to eliminate the residents here and establish your own military only hunting reserve. I'm usually neutral when it comes to the military but this proposal just plain pissed me off! Tanana Flats hunter and orv user.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**23-Aug-01  
Donald W. Davis**

Comment: I believe it would be a great injustice to the people of the Fairbanks to impose any restrictions on accessing the Flats for recreation or sport hunting. I have lived in the Fairbanks area for 38 years. My father took me on my first moose hunt in the Flats years ago and I believe I should have the right to do so with my son. Of all the acreage available to the military with their helicopters and planes etc., it makes no sense at all to keep local folks from being able to use the local area for recreational purposes because

the military wants make it their private playground. The proposal is ridiculous and totally insensitive to needs of the local population. It smacks of something the environmental fanatics cooked up to further their efforts in making all of Alaska into a park. Its bullshit and needs to be stopped! We live here for crying out loud and that is our playground! I can guarantee there will be some serious problems if this is allowed to happen. Respectfully,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**23-Aug-01**

**Jay Cable**

Comment: I am writing in support of the proposed INRMP requirements for the Tanana Flats. I am very pleased to see the Army attempt to address the impacts of ORVs in these sensitive areas. I strongly support these restrictions, particularly the restrictions on airboats. Thanks for taking the time and effort to draft these regulations on such an important issue. My regards.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**23-Aug-01**

**John A. Miller**

Comment: I object to your proposal to ban ORV from the Tanana Flats. They do no SIGNIFICANT damage and not allowing them effectively eliminates most opportunity for private citizens to use these lands. This area has been used by many people for many years for lots of outdoor activities at no discernable detriment to the Army. I also find it highly hypocritical to point to habitat damage as a partial justification for the proposal. One only needs to take a short flight over the Tanana Flats to see that past and current scars left by the Army and its activities greatly exceed those left by airboaters and other civilian ORV users. I urge you to drop this idea. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**23-Aug-01**

**Justin Swift**

Comment: Leave well enough alone. The hunters and sportsmen that have used this area for the last several decades and have not done near the damage the military has in its other training areas. Quit trying to reduce what few areas we have left for our use. This town has done nothing but support the military bases here and this is how you return your thanks??? If you all want to be greenies maybe its time you are closed down like many other Bases in other States and return our land to the public for our uses only!!! We in Alaska are not many but we do have a impact in Congress. The four voters and donators in my family will watch your decision closely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**23-Aug-01**

**Mike M. Silva**

Comment: I would like to read a copy of the proposal for restricting vehicle use in the Flats. Please tell me where I can obtain a copy. If it is on a web site please send me the address. Thank you.

*Response: Information provided*

**23-Aug-01**

**Ronnie Rosenberg**

Comment: I am writing in support of the Army's efforts to protect the Tanana Flats. As the population of Fairbanks increases, the pressure on the Flats can be projected to increase. I think the proposed management plan is a reasonable accommodation allowing the public to have access and the Army to use the land for military purposes while at the same protecting wildlife. I applaud any restriction of air boats in the wetlands. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**23-Aug-01**

**Steve Ulvi**

Comment: Please include these comments in the public record for your draft Natural Resource Management Plan. My comments concern the use of all-terrain vehicles and airboats outside of designated trails and watercourses respectively. I have hunted in the interior for all of the 27 years I have been an Alaska resident. Hunting requires ethical conduct, woodsmanship and respect for the natural world. Hunting on lands managed by the federal government for the benefit of the public is a privilege. The pursuit of happiness and quality of life is a right. I have hunted moose by canoe powered by a small kicker on Clear Creek and Salchaket Slough. From small comfortable camps along the creek we used tree stands and still hunting techniques while calling. Although there were a few more hunters than I was used to in more remote parts of the state the density of the moose population and decent success rate made it worthwhile. I stopped hunting the that area of the Tanana Flats precisely because of uncontrolled ATV and airboat use. When one is hunting or travelling in a canoe even crossing paths with an airboat on a small stream is unnerving. When the operator is disrespectful of other hunters, as they often seem to be, such an encounter can be downright dangerous. Some jet boat and outboard operators are the same way to be sure. But when airboats scream across the wetlands on step, hunt by lights before and after shootable light, and drown out all natural sounds a traditional woodsman depends upon they destroy my opportunity to feed my family and to recreate on public lands. From an airplane the hideous scars on the flats have spread like a cancer and studies have proven conclusively that hydrologic regimes are significantly altered. It is not possible that airboats travelling at high rates of speed especially at dusk are not harassing wildlife and waterfowl using wetland habitats. And that is when the operator is trying to minimize impacts. When airboats crank up at dawn on a cold autumn morning, even from a mile or two away, all sounds of moose and telltale indications of their presense are obliterated. Until the noise abates or the airboat happens to leave the area sight hunting is the only means available to a traditional hunter. As a result the chances of success are greatly reduced. A few airboat operators are destroying the chances for solitude, enjoyment of the natural world and the deep emotional rewards of fair chase hunting for many. It has surprised me that the Army has rightly suggested restricting ATVs and airboats to designated trails and creeks and rivers. I applaud your interest in providing for traditional hunting practices near to Fairbanks and restricting activities that adversely impact both the natural environment and the rights of others. You are attempting to serve the public trust. I strongly you to restrict airboat and ATV use as described in the plan so



that others have a reasonable opportunity to use the flats environment within military lands. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**8/23/2001**

**Tom Seibel**

Comment: I do not agree with the Army's Integrated Natural Resource Plan for 1998-2001 which banned the use of off road vehicles and airboats from the Tanana Flats, The public was not even informed of this significant management change. I do not agree with the current Draft Integrated Natural Resource Plan for 2002-2006 that continues to ban off road vehicles and airboats from the Tanana Flats, The military does not even use the area that I use for outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing. My only access is with these vehicles that the public has traditional used for over 40 years. The Army needs to allow traditional access to the Tanana Flats. The Army and the citizens of the Fairbanks area need to live and work together in harmony as we have in the past.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 5.*

**24-Aug-01**

**David K. Boyd**

Comment: U.S. Army – The Tanana Flats belong to us Alaskans, not the U.S. Army. Please remember that. You are here as invited guests. It is your business to operate within the parameters of what is best for your Alaskan hosts. You should simply not plan any maneuvers in the flats during hunting season. If the Army and Alaskan hunters can't both use the Tanana flats, then the Army should just withdraw and do your training in another area. Since Alaskans and the Army have lived as neighbors for many decades, it appears the Army just needs to get off its' high horse and act like humans again, and leave the hunters, fishermen, and trappers alone. In other words: just drop this whole idiotic plan and don't let anyone else know it was ever even suggested! Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 4.*

**24-Aug-01**

**Lee Daniels**

Comment: As a resident of Alaska for 32 years as well as former member of the US Army assigned to Ft. Greely I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the proposed closure of the Tannana Flats to Airboats and other ORVs. Over the past 32 years I have noticed a recurring pattern of both the US Army and Airforce when it comes to military lands (Public Lands) and their use. It appears that whenever the Military wants to acquire additional lands the first step is to limit public use of said lands based on training requirements. The second step is to begin using some form of ordinance on these lands, Rockets, Bombs or artillery. After this has been accomplished it then proudly pronounces that these lands need to be withdrawn from all public use as they are "Not Safe" for public access. I view the continuing progressive restrictions on the use of the Tannana flats as the first steps in totally eliminating public use of this area. As such I am OPPOSED to ANY further restrictions of any type on the use of this land by the United States Military. The military has more than sufficient lands for its training exercises without having to impose any further restrictions, or destroying through the use of ordinance, any additional

lands. One only needs to look at the bombing ranges to the East or the rocket ranges to the North to see what the future holds for these lands if further restrictions are allowed. Alaska Natives have taken over 52 million acres in native selections and want preferential treatment on all federal lands. The environmentalist have created national parks and monuments which have restricted the use of tens of millions of additional acres in the state. Now the military wants to expand it land holdings and further restrict land use in the name of a "National Security" in order to preserve America and the "American way of life." What way of life? This is one taxpayer who is getting damned tired of footing the bill for all these programs while being shoved off land and denied the use of resources that rightfully belongs to all Americans. My family came to this country in 1632, we have fought in every war from the King Phillips Indian war, American revolution, Civil war, war of 1812, the Alamo, WW1, Korea, WW2, Viet Nam and for what? It would seem the more Americans give the more the Government takes. If you really need additional lands to train on, I would suggest you take the troops down south and train along the Mexican boarder where they may do some good.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 4.*

**24-Aug-01**

**Robert Firor**

Comment: I realize the military can do whatever it wants regarding it's land, however, the decision to close the land to vehicles is a huge lifestyle change for many people in the interior. I snowmobile in this area and use it to get to various cabins in that area. I also have a gold mine in the Dry Creek area and the only way in to this, mine, I believe, crosses military land. I ask that you reconsider the decision regarding the use of the Tanana Flats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**24-Aug-01**

**Ruth Prokopowich**

Comment: Bully pulpit. To the editor: Tim Mowry has once again written a successful column, successfully inaccurate, tasteless and inflammatory (Aug. 24, 2001). His opening sentence is vintage Mowry, "It's no secret that the U.S. Army specializes in covert operations." I don't know what you'd call World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm but covert isn't the word that comes to my mind. Too bad the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan wasn't put out by the CIA then his statement might have been closer to reality as the rest of us know it. Generally I try and avoid reading his often poorly written stories and columns but the headline and opening sentence caught my eye; I took a deep breath and persevered to the end. As a result I now know that, if the gospel according to Mowry, the Army is not our neighbor and a source of local economic well-being but the enemy and that we must all be on the defensive against their outrageous and ignorant actions. Whenever I read something written by Mowry I wonder if he actually graduated from college with a journalism degree and if so is it printed on yellow paper? As a former Army brat I have years of personal experience in; how stupid and wasteful large hierarchical bureaucracies can be. But in this case I am puzzled as to why both Mowry and our local governmental



body feel the need to censor the Army for doing the right thing. They put out a plan, they made it available to the public and have responded to public concern by expanding the comment period. Prior to reading this article, I wasn't aware that engaging in dialogue with your neighbors was the hallmark of a "neighborhood bully."! The freedom to express opinions is important and so is the responsibility to be accurate when expressing those opinions in a public or private forum. Mowry used this particular column as a "bully pulpit" to drag the Army over the coals of his personal opinion in an inaccurate and inflammatory manner. Is that a professional or neighborly thing to do?

*Response: Comment noted*

**24-Aug-01  
Terry Cummings**

Comment: I am writing to comment on the Tanana Flats issue which is accepting public comment until 8/31/01. I am in favor of your decision to limit airboats and off-road vehicles on the Tanana Flats. This is a responsible and needed action and I commend you for same. Our wetlands and wilderness are being destroyed by off-road vehicles and airboat noise and pollution. Vegetation is unable to recover and wildlife and human life is greatly disturbed by the noise and pollution these recreational vehicles cause. Your proposal is a good plan and would allow sportsmen and fishers to use the area with limited destruction. Alpine areas, as well as bogs and marshes, are very sensitive and do not recover from damage caused by recreational vehicles. Birds, as well as mammals, pass through and use these areas and they need this limited protection. Thank you for the opportunity to express my feelings regarding this important issue. I have resided in Alaska for over 38 years and love this quiet, beautiful state where I have raised my family and I hope it will stay that way for generations to come. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**24-Aug-01  
Tim Mowry**

Comment: **Army should back off plan to ban airboats. Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, Friday, August 24.** It's no secret that the U.S. Army specializes in covert operations. So it should come as no surprise that the Army's plan to ban airboats, four-wheelers and snowmachines from military land in the Tanana Flats wasn't made public until the last minute. Sure, the Army will tell you its Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, which included the aforementioned ban, was available for review back in June. ; People had plenty of time to wade through the 200-plus page document to find the few pages that outlined the restrictions for ORVs, which were conveniently located in the next-to-last chapter of the plan. That's true, but it's also ; downright sneaky. Of course, we should expect no less judging from the Army's previous maneuvers. It was just three years ago that the Army decreed that anyone who hunts on military land must have a hunter education certificate to do so. A press release was issued in late November, only about a month before the regulation was due to go into effect on Jan. 1. Sound familiar? The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the only agency that teaches a certified hunter education course in Alaska, had no idea the Army was planning to impose such a requirement. The result was a flood of hunters on the doorsteps of Fish and Game wanting to sign up for hunter education courses. Due to the inconvenience" it would cause Fish and Game to usher more than 1,000 hunters through its hunter education

class in a matter of a few months, the Army backed off, twice postponing the regulation to give hunters more time to complete the class. The hunter education requirement is now scheduled to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2002. Not surprisingly, Fish and Game didn't know anything about the Army's plan to ban off-road vehicles in the Tanana Flats either, despite the fact that Fish and Game is the agency that manages wildlife resources in the area. The Army didn't bother informing Fish and Game of the proposed restrictions, even though it could have a significant impact on how the state manages hunting in the area. The Tanana Flats are the most productive moose hunting area in the state and Fish and Game has gone out of its way to advertise that fact over the last decade, worried that the moose population, which stands at an estimated 10,000, may be too high. Hunters shoot more than 500 moose in Game Management Unit 20A each year and the majority of those are taken in the Tanana Flats. Not surprisingly, air-boaters have the highest success rate of any group of hunters in the Tanana Flats. Likewise, the Army didn't notify the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee, a group of local hunters, trappers and fishermen that makes recommendations to the state of the restrictions. Nor did the Army bother telling the Interior Alaska Airboat Association about the proposed ban. Had the Army truly wanted the public to comment on the issue, those would have been obvious steps to take. Normally, a proposal to ban off-road vehicles such as the one the Army put forth in its new five-year Integrated Natural Resources Plan would be the cause for a series of public meetings and environmental studies, which it should. But that hasn't been the case here. There hasn't been a single public meeting on the issue. If there was a sound scientific or environmental reason for banning airboats, four-wheelers and snowmachines from the Tanana Flats, that would be one thing. But there is not, at least not that the Army has provided. In fact, a 1990 study .by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers basically .concluded that airboats had little impact on the Tanana Flats. The "study recommended that more studies be done, including the detailed mapping of airboat trails, a census of beavers and spring nesting swans, hydrology, and flow; water through the wetlands and a determination of vegetation re-growth/ recovery in airboat trails. To the best of my knowledge, the Army, has done, "none of those tests. The only reason airboats have been restricted-in other .parts of the Interior such as Minto Flats and the Nenana Controlled Use Area is that they are too loud, not too destructive. Airboats do less damage to what is the floating vegetation mat known as the Tanana Flats than four-wheelers do to trails all over Alaska. What's more, airboats are the only feasible means of summer access to the Tanana Flats. You can't get there any other way. By banning the use of airboats, the Army is basically turning the Tanana Flats into a refuge. "Last I heard, bombing ranges,; weren't part of most refuges? The Army is similar to the school yard bully who demands milk money from the class wimp until the wimp gets his courage up to fight back and challenges the bully, who then backs down because he's not as tough as everyone thinks. Remember, in addition to the hunter education fiasco, it wasn't all that long ago that the Army, refused to let civilians use the downhill ski area on Fort Wainwright. The Army said it needed the ski hill for training, although the only time I've seen soldiers racing down ski slopes was in a James Bond movie quite a few years back. Besides, I don't think Birch Hill ,is going to prepare troops for any kind of a battle in the Alps. It wasn't until the Army built a chairlift that it opened the ski area to the public,

a generous gesture considering it was taxpayers' money which built the ski area and later a chairlift to go with it. It will be interesting to 'see what the neighborhood bully does this time around. The Army already extended the comment period on the proposed ban from July 31 to Aug.' 31 after a story about the ban appeared in the News-Miner late last month and the Army was besieged with complaints about the lack of notice. One thing is for sure, the Interior Alaska Airboat Association is not the class wimp. Airboaters will fight back, just like they did when the Alaska Board of Game created the Nenana Controlled Use Area a few years back and made it off-limits to airboats. The airboat association sued the state and lost. Airboaters appealed that decision and lost again. They appealed a third time to the Alaska Supreme Court and lost a third time. All total, the association spent more than \$80,000 trying to get the decision overturned. The Tanana Flats are considered a sacred cow among air boaters, who have spent 30 years roaming the Flats in their swamp buggies. If they are going to make a last stand, this will be it. Let's hope the Army has the sense to retreat.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10.*

**25-Aug-01**

**Mark W. Lesle**

Comment: This letter to you today is to express my opposition to the Army's proposal to restrict the use of ORV on Army lands in the Tanana Flats area. This area is a valuable resource to many of us in the Fairbanks area. The Tannin Flats are one of the most productive moose habitats in the state. These restrictions would no longer allow the State to effectively manage the game animals in this area because those who hunt in this area would be denied traditional means of access. More than likely these people would seek other places to hunt and end up crowding other places in the Flats and surrounding area. Thank you for your time.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 7.*

**8/25/2001**

**Mike Milke**

Comment: I do not agree with the Army's Integrated Natural Resource Plan for 1998-2001 which banned the use of off road vehicles and airboats from the Tanana Flats. The public was not even informed of this significant management change. I do not agree with the current Draft Integrated Natural Resource Plan for 2002-2006 that continues to ban off road vehicles and airboats from the Tanana Flats. The military does not even use the area that I use for outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing. My only access is with these vehicles that the public has traditionally used for over 40 years. The Army needs to allow traditional access to the Tanana Flats. The Army and the citizens of the Fairbanks area need to live and work together in harmony as we have in the past.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, and 10.*

**26-Aug-01**

**Chris Greenfield-Pastro**

Comment: I approve of the Army's proposal that would prohibit airboats, four-wheelers, and other off-highway

vehicles in the Tanana Flats area. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**26-Aug-01**

**Jerry Wicklund**

Comment: This email is in response to the current flood of information on the restrictions to traffic of ORV and airboats on the flats. I have been airboating on the flats numerous time and find the area free of trash litter and evidence of man. The trails resulting from air boat usage are not present after the winter erases the previous years paths. Although I don't hunt I do go on into the flats during the season and register with the MP's before going. Hunters respect each others area and help each other out in the event of breakdowns and emergencies. If it is true you are going to restrict or eliminate usage, I am opposed and hope you will reconsider. I am a disabled Viet Nam vet and find my time spent in the flats very calming and peaceful. The loss of this privilege would be very upsetting. Thanks for listening.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**26-Aug-01**

**Lindsey Grennan & Jay Grennan**

Comment: Hi! I'm Lindsey and I am 11 years old. I have a nine year old brother, Jay. We have been going to the Tanana Flats by boat and snow machine since we were babies. We use the area as a source of recreational use and over-night camping. We have been taught to respect the animals and their natural habitat. We have shared a lot wonderful memories in the Tanana Flats. Our family hunts and fishes on the Tanana Flats too. We grew up eating moose meat. Dad usually gets one every year. Moose meat and fish are healthy foods. This year my brother and I, Dad and Mom too, applied for cow moose tags. My brother was the only one in the family that got a cow moose tag and he is very excited about it. I am going to hunt too. Since we are just kids beginning to hunt, we need our dad and his airboat and four wheeler to get a moose. If you ban airboats and ORVs from the Tanana Flats, my brother and I will not have the chance to use the land to watch the wildlife, hunt, fish and have fun in the woods like we do now. So in closing, please leave the Tanana Flats open to the public for us and our generation to use now and in the future. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**26-Aug-01**

**Stelling, John H**

Comment: I have hunted the flats from time to time with friends on airboats. I see no reason to limit the use of airboats on the flats. Four wheelers are another topic and should be considered seperately. Most of the flats that im framiliar with is only accessable by airboat. Nothing else can touch it. Unless the ARMY has plans to get into the airboat business, if you were to restrict access then no one would be able to access this important recreational area. Four wheelers on the other hand do alot of damage to the tundra. I would recommend you look at a pounds per square foot restriction. For instance an ARGO or similar vehicle has a very light

footprint and has very little impact on the turf. Dont lock it up just because its MINE.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**26-Aug-01  
Wendy Edwards**

Comment: I would like to protest the army's proposed closure of the Tanana Flats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**27-Aug-01  
Bernie Hoffman**

Comment: I am writing to you to express my support of the military ban of airboats, four-wheeler and other off-road vehicles from the Tanana Flats. In regards to off-road vehicles, there is clear evidence to support the fact that these vehicles damage the terrain. Additionally, some off-road vehicle owners demonstrate little or no regard for protecting the terrain by trashing it. In addressing the safety issue on the Flats, I believe the Army has very good reasons to restrict land use. Unexploded ordnances must likely do exist in the Flats. The military should everything possible before someone gets hurt or killed. By doing so, the Army will save the government and the people a lot of money. Since the hazard is known to exist, someone who was hurt could sue the government/Army. It's best to that action now before an injury or death is the result of inaction. Thank you, Good luck. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**27-Aug-01  
Betty Redfern**

Comment: I sincerely disagree with the Army's proposed ban on ORVS and Airboats. This is an area where airboats can run and not disturb other hunters, the other boats cannot get into the swamp. Take this away and it will over crowd the other rivers and streams. Hunters will fine a place to hunt even if it's in someone's back door (their special place to hunt). This has been our traditional hunting and recreational grounds for 35 years. Thanks for the extended comment period.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**27-Aug-01  
Cliff Eames**

Comment: Is the above plan on the web? I'd like to take a look at it. Thanks.

*Response: Information provided*

**27-Aug-01  
David J. Miller**

Comment: Army's right? To the editor: I attended the recent Fair-banks North ..Star Borough meeting at which the borough voted 8-2 to issue a resolution expressing their disgust with the Army's process and conclusions concerning ORVs on the Flats. The testimony given that evening was

dominated by the issue of airboats being denied access to: leave the major waterways. If access to the area were the only issue I would be in total support of the use of these large, powerful and yes obnoxious machines but alas it is not. I have hunted on the Flats for the last 20 years and here is what I have observed. Airboats are used as a mobile hunting platform by a significant portion of the airboat operators. They drive around the swamp, trails and even dry fields trying to locate a legal moose. When a moose is located they accelerate into position, stop the motor and shoot it. I guess they think this is legal. These same people who are up in arms about their access being taken away have already driven away one by one, hundreds of hunters who use what I call fair chase methods. It is a fact that a ground-based hunter cannot hope to compete with an airboat-mounted hunter. One airboat hunting on the move covers the same area that could comfortably support many ground-based hunters. Most fair chase hunters I know will not even think of going into the Flats because of previous bad encounters with airboats. Many of these former Flats hunters are now, traveling hundreds of miles to have a quality hunting experience free of airboat interference when some of the best moose habitat hi the world is just south of town. There are airboat users who use their boats to get into remote areas and then use fair chase methods to get their moose, but the unfortunate fact is that if; these users cannot police their own ranks and get the drive and shoot faction to park their boats and hunt, they should probably, try to sell their airboats while they can. The Army might just have it right.

*Response: Comment noted*

**27-Aug-01  
EUGENE ANDERSON**

Comment: I AM OPPOSED TO ANY CLOSURE OF THE TANANA FLATS TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THANK YOU

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**27-Aug-01  
Greg Whisenhant**

Comment: I remember climbing a look-out tree on Clear Creek and spotting my first bull moose when I was eight years old. I also remember the time my dad and I spent together the next few hours as we dressed out the moose and packed the meat back to our canoe. Thirty-four years have past since then and there are many more memories that I share with my brother, dad and other family members that I've hunted with in the Clear Creek area. I've enjoyed Clear Creek because of the beautiful fall colors, the autumn air, the many wild animals and the peaceful tranquility as well has added to the uniqueness of the area. Most people using the area have used motor powered riverboats or canoes and ever so often an airboat. It wasn't until about 3 years ago that things started to change. There were places along the creek bank that the grass and willows had been pushed down flat. Looking further, we found that whatever it was made a trail further inland by pushing down all the small brush in it's way. A few days later, close to camp we heard an incredibly loud noise out in the field nearby. It wasn't until then that we figured out that the trail makers were airboats. During moose season last year the problem got much worse, While at camp and up in our spotting tree, many rimes we had airboats buzz right through our field. There were several moose we were



attempting to call but because of the noise they eventually left the area. There was another time that an airboat stopped no more than 100 yards out in the same field to try to look through his binoculars to see what we might be looking at. One evening we were boating back up to our camp and heard an airboat in a field next to us. We thought it sounded unusual because it sounded like it was going around in circles. We stopped, climbed a tree and observed an airboat chasing a cow moose. I thought until then a moose in the tundra could not run an airboat. That moose would dodge to the right and the airboat would cut her off. The moose would dodge again and the airboat was either on her heels or pulling up right next to her. One night it was pitch black out, my brother and I were asleep and then, at about 1 AM we were both awakened by yet another airboat out in the field. Stumbling out of my tent to see what was going on, I climbed the tree again to see an airboat with huge flood lamps in front going in and out of the brush. We came away from the hunt with no moose but what mattered the most and put a real bad feeling into the hunt were airboat operators. Bottom line is: They ruined the peace and tranquility that we usually find on our times hunting and scared the moose away. If banning airboats from the Tanana Flats becomes politically too difficult to pass, at least consider a compromise. Instead of banning them completely, allow any motorized boat operator access to the flats as long as they do not leave the boundaries of any creek, river or lake (their boat stays in the water). Any access beyond the banks will be in a non-motorized fashion. Thank you for your time. Sincerely yours.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**27-Aug-01  
Karen Parr**

Comment: Fort Wainwright, Alaska. If you need to contact me or other members of the Assembly for any reason, please call the Borough Clerk's Office at 459-1401 or email to clerks@co.fairbanks.ak.us. Carry Hutchison, Bonnie Williams, Guy Sattley, Tim Beck, Rick Solie, Jim Holm. Introduced: '08/09/01, Advanced: 08/09/01, Amended: 08/23/01, Adopted: 08/23/01, RESOLUTION NO. 2001 - 52, A RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO RESTRICTING CIVILIAN ACCESS TO TRADITIONAL HUNTING AND TRAPPING GROUNDS LOCATED SOUTH OF FAIRBANKS IN THE TANANA FLATS. WHEREAS, the Tanana Flats has been an important area for Fairbanks North Star Borough hunters and trappers to satisfy their subsistence needs since the time when settlers first built this community, and WHEREAS, the area is currently used by individuals from all walks of life for hunting, fishing, trapping, snow-machining, dog mushing, skiing, camping, outdoor recreating, river boating, and as a transportation corridor between the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the Alaska Range; and WHEREAS, Fairbanks North Star Borough residents have a great love of the outdoors and believe access to this traditional wilderness area is an essential freedom that residents will strongly defend, and WHEREAS, the military has not demonstrated a substantive need for restricting access by the Fairbanks North Star Borough community, and WHEREAS, the military is a valued part of our community and needs to be aware of the concerns Fairbanks North Star Borough residents have regarding access restricting lands traditionally used by residents of the Borough, NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Assembly of

the Fairbanks North Star Borough requests the Department of Defense accommodate the reasonable access needs our community has to the Tanana Flats by restoring access regulations to those currently in force. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution is submitted as public comment on the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for Ft. Wainwright Alaska. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be sent to Senator Ted Stevens, Senator Frank Murkowski, Congressman Don Young, the Interior Delegation, and Major General Jim Lovelace, Commanding General United States Army/Alaska. PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 3rd DAY OF AUGUST 2001. Karen H. Parr, Presiding Officer ATTEST: Monaf Lisa Drexler, CMC Municipal Borough Clerk Ayes: Williams, Foote, Sattley, Beck, Cummings, Hutchison, Solie, Parr Noes: Webb, Veazey RESOLUTION NO. 2001-52

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 8.*

**27-Aug-01  
Skip Binkley**

Comment: I was distressed to learn, after the fact, of the Army's decision to ban O.R.V.'s in their previous I.N.R.P. I disagree most adamantly with the new I.N.R.P. for 2002-2006 which augments this ban. The Tanana Flats are too important for recreation by the residents of this community, to continue, or further restrict, its already limited use. I am convinced that virtually unrestricted civilian use of portions of the Tanana Flats (as in the past) can be allowed without interfering with the military mission. Environmental concerns are, at the very most, speculative and are not supported by any third party studies or scientific evidence.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**8/28/2001  
Bari Hite**

Comment: I am writing to express my profound dismay at the idea of instituting the above mentioned plan. I was born and raised in Fairbanks and have remained dedicated to preserving our land and our heritage. This area holds the largest moose population in the State, due in part to our excellent stewardship of the land. Nobody could love or maintain the land as well as the residents who live and work here, dedicated to the preservation of our Alaskan way of life. I have used the area mentioned mainly for flight training. The pilots in the Interior practice their maneuvers in this area. I have only been on the ground here by airboat since that is the only means of access through the majority of the year. It is beautiful out there. Please don't take our access to this area away from us.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**28-Aug-01  
Carl Benson**

Comment: I am writing to voice my support of the proposed ban of airboat and ATV use in the Tanana Flats lands managed by the Army. It is my belief that this ban will serve to support the quality of the ecosystem in the Flats. In addition the ban, if imposed, will help repair the damage done by airboats and ATVs in the flats to date. This damage



is clearly visible from an elevation up to 10,000 feet. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**28-Aug-01**

**DONALD L. HULSHIZER**

Comment: I HEREBY PROTEST THE ARMY'S CLOSURE OF THE TANANA FLATS TO PUBLIC HUNTING OR ANY OTHER ACTIVITIES. THIS AREA IS ESPECIALLY VALUABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF ALASKA u FOR PROCUREMENT OF MEAT, FISH AND BERRIES, IT IS UNIQUE IN I THIS WORLD TO HAVE SUCH AN AREA CLOSE TO A CITY LIKE FAIRBANKS. AS FOR THE NOISE CREATED BY CIVILIZATION, THAT IS OUR PROBLEM, LET US TAKE CARE OF IT. ALREADY THE MANUFACTURERS ARE DEVELOPING FAIRLY QUIET PROPELLORS FOR THE AIRBOATS AND I'M SURE THAT THEY WILL IMPROVE THEM MORE IF NECESSARY. I AM 82 YEARS OLD, BEEN IN ALASKA FOR 55 YEARS, I HAVE SPENT FIVE YEARS IN THE REGULAR ARMY AIR CORP IN WORLD WAR II. I HAVE HUNTED IN ALASKA ALMOST EVERY YEAR AND IT IS A TERRIBLE THING TO HAVE SOME GOVERNMENT AGENCY COME IN AND TAKE AWAY A FREEDOM THAT REALLY BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE. I DON'T THINK ANY OF MY FRIENDS KILLED IN WWII WOULD LIKE.IT. RESPECTFULLY YOURS.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**28-Aug-01**

**Garry Hutchison**

Comment: Please allow this letter to be my testimony objecting to plans in the INRMP that would significantly change the access rights our community currently has to a major hunting, trapping, and recreation area. This area is roughly located west of Clear Creek, aka Nelson Clearwater, and west of the Bonnefield trail. This area is used heavily in the winter time by winter outdoor folks, including the snow machine community, and in the summer time by airboat operators. According to my reading of the INRMP, the military is preparing to spend \$3 million annually, to hire enforcement officers, and develop a computerized monitoring and check-in system. This seems to infer the military is planning to take control of this area for the purpose of utilizing it for training. This area has been traditionally used by our community. If Fort Wainwright chooses to expand its training into this area, and implement a control system designed to allow this to occur, I predict the community will not react favorably. Please note the resolution passed by the Fairbanks North Star Borough on August 23, 2001, requesting the military to respect the traditional access rights this community has to the area I've outlined above. The resolution had the support of 9 of 11 members. Please consider reviewing your new mission requirements to see if the above-described area can be left alone. If not, please consider utilizing this area minimally and on a shared basis. Perhaps the military could refrain from using the area on the weekends and not use access enforcement officers during periods of time when the area is not being utilized. Thank you for the opportunity to offer my views.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 4.*

**28-Aug-01**

**Greg Turner**

Comment: I emailed you last week to express my views on the plan to eliminate airboats from the Tanana Flats. I did not receive a reply from you stating you had received my message. I know the comment period is the end of August so I decided to send a letter also. I do not agree with the Integrated Natural Resource Plan for 2002-2006 which bans the use of off road vehicles and airboats from the Tanana Flats. We use this area for moose hunting and outdoor recreation. This access has been in use for over forty years and needs to be open. This was a surprise and shock to all of us, including people from BLM that help manage this land. I hope the Army will continue to allow traditional access to the Tanana Flats, so my children and grandchildren can enjoy the outdoor recreational opportunities I've had available to me.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, and 10.*

**8/28/2001**

**Loren Hite**

Comment: I am writing to request that the above mentioned plan NOT be enacted. As a life long resident of Fairbanks, I have used that area to hunt by dogteam and also by airboat. As a hunter this region is of profound importance to area residents. As one who has used this area for years, I can state that we have never strayed into the bombing / range, and are more than likely to leave less of an impact to the area than the bombing leaves. Please do not destroy one of Alaska's strongest moose population's by instilling this plan. Without hunting the area (and airboat is the only way to travel to this area) you will destroy the moose by allowing an upswing in the wolf and bear population thereby depleting this population of moose, which is so important to us. We are the best stewards of this land Please allow us to continue.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 7.*

**28-Aug-01**

**Nancy Fresco**

Comment: I am writing on behalf of the Northern Alaska Environmental Center in order to express our support for the US Army Alaska's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for Fort Wainwright. In particular, we stand behind the Army's assessment of impacts cause by civilian use of airboats and other off-road vehicles. We feel that the new restrictions to these vehicles - as well as enforcement of existing restrictions - are appropriate, and show a fair balance between the desires of subsistence and recreational land users and the effective protection of the land and its resources. The Tanana Flats wetlands are important to Fairbanks as both a scenic backdrop and as a resource for hunters, boaters, skiers, mushers, and other users. We respect the Army's stated desire to protect these uses as much as possible. However, we also respect the need to partially restrict access in regions that pose a significant risk to civilians because of danger from unexploded ordnance or other training-related debris. We hope that now and in the future these heavily restricted areas will be kept as

small as possible, and that new parts of the Flats will not successively be appropriated for such activities. While many members of the off-road vehicle lobby have publicly criticized the Army's plan as being too restrictive, and have persuaded the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly to take up their cause, some of these individuals do not appear to adequately understand the plan. The wording of the Borough's Resolution indicates as much. As we understand it, the plan does not ban hunting, fishing, snowmachining, boating, skiing, mushing, or camping. The plan does impose summertime restrictions on airboats and four-wheelers, but such restrictions - and enforcement of them - are sorely needed. The wetlands and fens of the Tanana Flats represent a fragile ecosystem that nurtures a wealth of wildlife, including calving moose, raptors, and thousands of migratory birds. Not only do airboats create significant noise pollution, which disrupts wildlife; they also tear up the wetland vegetation when used in insufficiently deep water. Limiting them to known waterways (as listed in the plan) is a fair compromise. Four-wheelers are also highly destructive to the vegetative mat, and keeping them to upland areas offers a reasonable balance of competing interests. Once destroyed, wetland vegetation is slow to regrow, if it ever regrows at all. If the ecosystem of the Tanana Flats is compromised, then many of the uses that Fairbanksans value so highly will likewise be compromised. Thus, we believe that it is prudent to take the measures that the Army has outlined in the Fort Wainwright INRMP for 2002-2006, and to continue to implement such measures in the future. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**28-Aug-01**  
**Ronald C. Bless**

Comment: I do not agree with the current draft integrated natural resource plan for 2002-2006 that bans off-road vehicles and airboats from the Tanana Flats. The military does not even use the area that I use for outdoor recreation, hunting, and fishing. My only access is with these vehicles that the public has traditionally used for over 40 years. The Army and Fairbanks community need to live and work together in harmony as we have in the past.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 5.*

**28-Aug-01**  
**S. Betsy Cluenic**

Comment: I was and am happy to hear of the Army's proposed closure of parts of the Tanana Flats to various forms of recreation. I have never been over there, as I am a strictly non-motorized recreational hiker and backpacker. However, from what I have read in the newspaper and heard on the radio - and talked over with friends, as well as seen from airplanes - the Tanana Flats are invaded by hunters during hunting season - and they're tearing this area up. I don't know what the Army's reasoning is behind the closure - but as a bird watcher, nature-lover I think it's great. Please do close the Tanana Flats to snow machines, airboats and 4-wheelers. Give the wildlife a chance and quiet recreationalists some silence! (Except of course if you're planning to drop bombs there instead). Thanks, Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**28-Aug-01**  
**Susan Bless**

Comment: I would like to say that I am adamantly opposed to the military's proposed ban on the use of airboats and off-road vehicles in the Tanana Flats. The Tanana Flats has been a valuable hunting area and if closure did occur, both soldiers and civilians would be forced to seek other locations to hunt in. This in turn would cause overcrowding of hunting areas and would put an undue strain on the animal population. As a 23-year Fairbanks resident and a taxpayer since 1969, I do not want to see this most unpleasant and stressful situation occur.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 7.*

**28-Aug-01**  
**Todd McDonald**

Comment: As a lifelong user of the Tanana flats I am opposed that the military will stop Alaskans from using their own resource that a bunch of people from some distant area will be able too. The Tanana flats are for the use of Alaskans. The military are not Alaskans, never have, never will. The blatant arrogance of the military trying to regulate us is sad and will lead to nothing more than hatred of Alaskans for the military. The air farce is now running their heavy flight times right in hunting season just to try to run roughshod over us. They used to stop air ops during hunting season. I hope you will consider us civilians sometime. thanks for your time

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 4.*

**29-Aug-01**  
**Aimee Clausen Gossett**

Comment: I have contacted Senator Murkowski's office and feel that I have a better grasp of the situation we are all facing. It appears you are forced to pay fines to and comply with EPA's regulations while at the same time cleaning up after hunters. Therefore, I requested that the EPA regulations be changed and that you, the Army, be allowed to use this area year around as well as hunters. As a responsible hunter, I spend at least one full day every hunting season cleaning up after week end warriors so I can imagine some of what you face. If we can all use this area responsibly, which I believe is possible, I think it far more practical to change the regulations for this area. I have personally slogged through this area on foot and wish you all the best. I am requesting that in the interim while the regulations are still in effect that you allow airboaters in the Flats. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted*

**29-Aug-01**  
**Aimee Clausen Gossett**

Comment: I have hunted in Alaska for 24 years, including in the Tanana Flats. I do not own an airboat, however I am strenuously opposed to the exclusion of airboaters from the Flats. This land is under permit from BLM to the army and the use of it belongs to Alaskans. This closure is senseless. I will take all steps necessary to ensure the Flats stay open to all. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 4.*

**29-Aug-01**  
**Armond Dube**

Comment: I have been a resident of Alaska since 1959 when my father was assigned to Fort Greely, NWTC. Military lands, owned and leased are used by motorized boats, aircraft, motorized land vehicles, and arms fire of multiple types year-round, and have been since I can remember. In all of those years of military and civilian use, I can remember no circumstances that led to injury or hardship to either party on these lands. So, there doesn't seem to be any sound reason to use this as an excuse to ban the use of those lands by civilians. Should the State of Alaska ban the use of its land by military personnel because they may injure themselves or others while doing so? Should the State of Alaska not lease any land to the military for use as MOA's for fear of injury to the environment or its people? I think not. I also think the military needs to reconsider the plan to implement such a ban in the Tanana Flats. While I agree that there may be some environmental impact. I can't see how it could be any worse than tank, dozer, and humvee use, of which I'm sure you do not plan on discontinuing the use of in this area. Airboats are noisy, but, do not harm surface areas in the flats. ATVs have some impact, but are restricted to trails that already exist by waterways and boggy terrain. Snowmobiles are fast, but, do less harm to the terrain than someone walking. When the snow melts, those tracks are non-existent until the following late November when you have already completed your ice bridge across the river to access the six dozer blade wide Bonnefield Trail. Be realistic folks and withdraw the plan to ban public use of an area that has been open to those uses since before statehood!!! I'm sure the Federal government is aware of grandfather clauses and past practices laws. I rarely use this area, but, folks that do will be looking for another place to continue their activities. That means they will be moving in on areas I use, creating a crowded, dangerous situation. Thank you for your consideration.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, and 8.*

**29-Aug-01**  
**Lela Ryterski**

Comment: I listened to part of the Borough Assembly meeting on the radio. It seemed that the issue got confused by making access the issue instead of noise. Airboats are abusive with their noise pollution. That noise is far worse than any dogs lot. I inquired how anyone can stand to ride in those things and was told that they wear ear muffs. Either way they're isolated from their environment and wouldn't appreciate nature - let alone have respect for it - the animals - or other peoples experiences with nature and animals. They spent \$20-30,000 for an airboat so they can put meat on their table!?! Obviously it's not because they can't afford to buy meat. Are they natives who want to get their food that they're used to eating? If people are so concerned about beef not being healthy for you because of hormones and antibiotics - then they should address that issue. Air boats disturb the peace. Everyone has a right to live in peace - even animals. Isn't a peaceful world that we're striving for? Thanks to the Army for addressing the problem. Do they want to be macho hunters but are too feable to hunt in a more physical manner? Let it go. Realize your limitations and have respect. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**29-Aug-01**  
**Mark Terhune**

Comment: I am opposed to the Army closing the land to use by air boaters ,snow machines or any others unless their is proven it adversely affect the habitat or wildlife. It seems to me this is the duties of the Department of Fish and Game to evaluate the need for any action. How much study by has been done by the Army before this proposal was brought forward? I would like to see the results of any reports or studies. I also think the way the proposal was put forward without making it public knowledge either shows the people responsible are not aware of the impact it would have on the community or wanted to avoid the results it being made public.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**29-Aug-01**  
**michaels toy rmk**

Comment: i think that this airboat thing is stupid, the airboats in the flats dont hurt nothing and provide a wide range of hunting places for everyone, if airboats and orv get banned does that mean that the rules apply to everyone. i think that its stupid to even consider banning airboats from the tanana flats its stupid and there is no call for it.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**29-Aug-01**  
**Samuel S. Demientieff**

Comment: Let me first say, that I support the Integrated Natu...Fairbanks area via the Tanana River. Through the years hunters and trappers and more recently recreational users have used the flats area. The airboats are my main issue. The airboats, are extremely noisy, hard to control and are dangerous in close operations on the small sloughs and creeks. I understand that airboaters have rights as do all users. I believeairboats cause environmental damage, drain lakes by breaking beaver dams and distruping ducks, geese, cranes and many other small birds and animals that use the flats and its streams. Airboats have been known and heard chasing down moose and then shooting them. Airboats, I believe distrup fish and aquatic animals and cause erosion. My last complaint is the noise that airboats create, is dangerous to humans and must cause damage to fish, birds and animals that live there, in the flats. Lastly, I support the plan to ban airboats in the flats, I support the plan as proposed.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**29-Aug-01**  
**Tommy Van Vilet**

Comment: We are opposed to the ban of airboats and other ORVs in the Tanana Flats. We have enjoyed the flats for years and it would be a great shame to take it away.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*



**29-Aug-01**

**Wayde Leder**

Comment: I am writing to comment on the proposal to ban airboats and ATVs from the portion of the flats that the military controls. Normally a proposal like this surfaces after a problem has arisen. Then someone comes up with a proposed solution. However, in this case there has not been any problem. We have been using this portion of the flats for DECADES with out any problems! Now all of a sudden there is a problem? I have long been a supporter of the military. This action will have a serious effect on my opinion of the military. Please reconsider this unfounded decision. Thanks.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**30-Aug-01**

**Allison Thies**

Comment: I saw the add in the paper about the army closing down the flats to the public! I know one thing about that is it will hurt alot of long time fairbanks people. I was born here and I have lived here my hole life! Guess what my 4 favortie things are?? Snowmachining, boating,fishing, hunting! That would be where I always go snowmachining and boating! I have never been hunting back there but I know a lot of people that have. I grew up playing out there having fun! I am only 18 and I have spent alot of time out there! It's tons of fun! I do have one Question though for you! I don't know why they would want to close it down when we haven't hurt anything out there and We never would! It mainly just hurts to know that it will be closed to us!!I hope that some how this letter had gotten through and it will be read and I am trully saying this from my heart! I have also grown up around airboats! I just mainly wrote this hoping that this won't go through!!!! Thank you very much for reading this letter and I hope that something can be done about this!! Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**30-Aug-01**

**Ann Swift**

Comment: I'd like to make a last-minute comment about the proposed ban onoff-road vehicles in the Tanana Flats during the summer. I definitely support this closure. I'll admit to having a bias because I live above the Tanana River (on Anella Ave. at the far end of Chena Ridge) so airboats are a constant annoyance in the summer, and will be even more so during hunting season. Earlier this month I was awakened at 2 am by an airboat, which kept buzzing back and forth for long enough that I had a very difficult time getting back to sleep. They certainly weren't hunting at that time of night; it was pitch dark outside. We are many feet above the river, but the noise airboats make certainly exceeds that of the many airplaines we also hear due to our location. I know, though, that you would not be banning airboats on the river. I would think that the greatest problem with airboats in the Flats would be the noise, disturbing to everyone and everything in the area. More serious would be four-wheelers, which definitely do make tracks in the marsh, and as often happens in Alaska, such damage takes a long time to mend. I have hunted in the Flats. We use a riverboat to go up the Tanana and then make camp not far from the river and hike in further where we wait for moose. Once we get one, we pack it out, so we can't go too far in to hunt. Over the years we've seen

more and more four-wheelers, which is discouraging because we know they have the ability to get moose that are too far from the river for us to consider. However, the fact that we do get moose without a four-wheeler or an airboat indicates that the proposed ban is not a ban on hunting, as some have suggested. It seems that use of off-road vehicles for hunting has been increasing in recent years. Although this increased use may be discouraging to walk-in hunters, it is probably not a big problem in upland terrain. In any sensitive area, though, the tracks can cause a long-term change in the land and, I would think, ultimately in the ecology of the area. Too many times, land managers do not look to the future in the uses they allow. I support the Army for its forward thinking with this proposed ban. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**30-Aug-01**

**Cathy Persinger**

Comment: "If you outlaw guns, only outlaws will have guns." Your proposed ban in Tanana Flats, is not enforceable. Many people will go anyway. It will prevent some good citizens from trespassing and lead to more community conflicts and prejudices against military personnel. Will we the people pay for whole groups of military with the mission to keep Alaskan's off military lands? What next? Applying similar logic, shouldn't commercial airlines have to divert around your lands? Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**30-Aug-01**

**Douglas Yates**

Comment: Please accept the following comments as support for restrictions of ATV use within that part of Ft. Wainwright's training area commonly called the Tanana Flats. As a 25-year resident of Fairbanks, I am aware of the growing impact to sensitive wetlands from the use of ATVs. The damage to these areas is no longer acceptable given the conclusions of scientific investigations and a preponderance of anecdotal accounts. It is widely acknowledged that the use of ATVs has proliferated in recent years. I believe that research has shown that the area cannot continue to sustain this level of activity and remain productive. Impacts to water flow regimes, vegetation, and wildlife populations can no longer be accepted as business as usual. Modern ATVs, including airboats, have the capacity to transport large quantities of fuel and other toxic materials into this sensitive area. Given the lack of active monitoring, proposed restrictions will benefit the area from the accidental release of these materials. Noise pollution is real. Excessive, loud and constant noise from these machines is damaging the environment and extremely irritating to people who live along the north bank of the Tanana River. Loud noise has been documented as harmful and has the effect of keeping wildlife moving when it would otherwise be feeding or resting. For nearby residents, the noise prompts loss of the full ability to enjoy the values of a rural setting. Noise from ATVs also degrades the ability of others to effectively enter the area for hunting purposes. Recent public testimony at the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly made clear that scores of people have experienced a denial of use as a consequence of the presence of airboats. As a society, the



ability to engage in fair chase hunting is an important right and deserves protection. Airboat operators are denying that right to those who value its traditional appeal. Those people who cannot afford to purchase these expensive machines are effectively being shut out of hunting areas. With their access and hunting success denied, an important aspect of the Alaska experience is being lost. I applaud the U.S. Army's efforts to recognize and deal with this problem. I support the restrictions on the use of ATVs within that part of the Tanana Flats under the control of Ft. Wainwright's command. Please add my name and contact information to your data base of citizens interested in this issue. I wish to be kept apprised of developments toward finalization of the proposed changes to access modes. Submitted by.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**30-Aug-01**

**Gerald A. Richards**

Comment: We hope the extended public comment period, has demonstrated that access to the Tanana Flats Training Area is a high priority for many Alaskans. We also hope the comments received were both constructive and informative in nature. We respectfully request your consideration of changes to the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the years 2002 to 2006. Specifically, we request that the classification of the Tanana Flats Training Area be changed to an Open area from a Modified use area, with the exception of the Impact areas with which we concur should be classified as Off-Limits. We request this change be made on Figure 6(1 )(a) of the INRMP. Since Airboats are the least intrusive of all ORVs it is appropriate that the restriction on Airboat use in the margin of Figure 6(1 )(a) should also be eliminated. It is the intent of these changes to allow us to continue to use the existing system of trails and waterways that we have historically and traditionally used for the last 40 years. Similarly, we request the restrictions on use of airboats on page 183 of the INRMP under the definition of "Limited" be changed. This would best be done by eliminating the last sentence of the definition of "Limited". We believe these changes would result in the INRMP being more in compliance with the Sykes Act which requires multiple use of land when it does not conflict with the training and safety issues of the military. It is pretty obvious that the area in question is not usable by the military for training purposes except when the ground is frozen. This change to an open use area would still allow for temporary closures by Range Control whenever there was a future training use. The military is a very important part of our community and we wish to continue to work together as partners to jointly use the Tanana Flats Training Area. In that regard, we request an advisory committee be established that would work as a point of contact when future changes to access and use, such as this are proposed. In addition this advisory committee could work with all ORV user groups to assist the military in working on improving and/or remediation of certain wetland areas that might be deemed to be temporarily damaged. As a suggestion, the advisory committee to the Tanana Flats could have a representative from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and each of the user groups that recreate in the area. Decisions regarding the Tanana Flats have a direct effect on each of these organizations. Future studies of the wetlands area are important, and ORV user groups should assist with those studies. We want to be proactive in working with the military

to help solve future problems and to improve conditions in the Tanana Flats Training Area. Since annual re-growth of areas is so very high here in the Interior of Alaska, we request that monitoring of the Tanana Flats Training Area for trail expansion and related damage be performed in July of each year after the re-growth has occurred. It does not make sense to study an area in September when the grass and other plant life has already started to die off. We would like to reiterate that it is our intent to use the existing trails and waterways and not to create any new permanent trails. In closing, we hope this request will open the lines of communication between the military, the ORV user groups and the local governments concerned. Please feel free to contact me at 452-4156 if you have any questions in regards to our proposed changes. I would also volunteer to serve on the advisory committee if you decide that is a good idea. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 10.*

**30-Aug-01**

**Grace Pedersen**

Comment: I am in support of the Army's proposed ban on off-highway vehicles in the Tanana Flats, particularly airboats. Thank you for the opportunity to add my opinion.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**30-Aug-01**

**Howard Luke**

Comment: I am Howard Luke. I have lived all my 78 years on the Tanana Flats. I have lived a subsistence life hunting and trapping on the Flats. I used to enjoy life going out there and now I can't. Many years ago people used to respect one another. Now they just care for themselves. People should stay at my camp and see for themselves the noise that the airboats make. They can find out for themselves the kind of noise that they make. I want to see the airboaters take their ear plugs off and see how they can handle the noise. I have a Spirit Camp at my Native allotment on the Tanana River. I try to teach people and especially young people about the land and how to respect one another. A couple of weeks ago I was going down Salchaket Slough and an airboat just came around the corner and was right on me. I am thinking about the young kids and I am sick and tired of how they run all over the grass and the eggs. That is why all the birds are not coming back. I support the Army trying to restrict the airboats. If they don't there will be nothing here for the people. The animals will leave. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**30-Aug-01**

**Jim Whitaker**

Comment: As changes in regulation affecting the Tanana Flats area south of Fairbanks are considered, I strongly urge the Army to adopt a reasonable plan that allows for continued access for hunting and recreational purposes by all types of users.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 6.*

**30-Aug-01**

**RAY VANDERSOMMEN**

Comment: I WOULD JUST LIKE TO VOICE MY CONCERN AND OBJECTION TO YOUR PLAN TO CLOSE THE TANANA FLATS TO AIR BOATS AND ATVS. I HAVE HUNTED ON MILITARY LANDS FOR THE LAST 16 YEARS, BOTH ACCROSS THE RIVER AND BEHIND EIELSON AND HAVE ENJOYED THAT PRIVELEDGE. IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO LOSE THAT OPERTUNITY. I BELIEVE IT WOULD ALSO IMPACT CIVILIAN/MILITARY RELATIONS IN A VERY NEGATIVE WAY. PLEASE RECONSIDER THIS DECISION. THANKS.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**31-Aug-01**

**Alaska Outdoor Council, Richard H. Bishopf Vice President, BLM - Northern District Manager, Interior Airboat Association, Mayor Rhonda Boyles, Fairbanks North Star Borough**

Comment: This letter is to reaffirm the Alaska Outdoor Council's objections to the proposed restrictions on use of ORVs and airboats on the Tanana Flats, as outlined in the current Draft Integrated Natural Resources Plan for 2002-2006. We also object to current restrictions on ORV use under the 199802001 INRMP. Neither document provides realistic regulations relating to OR Vs. The limited effects of ORV use do not warrant the proposed restrictions or the classification of airboats as ORVs according to post studies and our collective personal knowledge of area use. The public safety factor should be addressed by the Army through adequate signage and on-ground identification of impact area boundaries. We have been told that limitations on allowable Army wetlands impact are driving the current proposed public access restrictions. That problem, if true, can be alleviated by the action we propose below. We formally request that the U.S. Army relinquish claims to and use of the Bonifield Trail and all lands west of it on the Tanana Flats used or owned by the Army. We also request appropriate action by Alaska's Congressional Delegation to facilitate this relinquishment. The area to be relinquished has not been used for Army ground surface training purposes for decades, if ever, and is the area of principle public interest. By relinquishing this area the Army would probably be able to meet the alleged wetland impact limitations on lands actually used for training, with no loss to its effective training opportunities. This land relinquishment should have been done decades ago and would benefit both the Army and the public. We request your careful consideration of our objection to the proposed ORV regulations, and of this land relinquishment proposal. Thank you.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8.*

**31-Aug-01**

**Bill Ohman**

Comment: I would like to comment on the Tanana Flats issue. I am concerned that you might be serious about restricting ATVs for hunting, including airboats. Even though I haven't hunted there often, I know it is one of the more productive and sustainable moose hunting areas in the Interior. To close that area off would put a lot of pressure on

other areas, so I strongly urge you to not close it to ATVs. In other parts of the US the airport is considered the least environmentally damaging craft. I hope this isn't a start of the military's version of community cooperation.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 8.*

**31-Aug-01**

**Chance Maguire**

Comment: Bow down. To the editor: The federal government wants to withhold funds for highways unless we conform to what they want. The federal government wants to take over how we control our fish and wildlife unless we go along with what they say. Now again here comes Big Brother-Uncle Sam, the federal government, the military-saying we're taking your land-the Tanana Flats and we really don't care about Alaskans. The only peaceful way I see of controlling this is to tell the military we don't want your troops in our towns and we don't want your kids taking up our classroom space-stay on post! Make the military feel the way us sportsmen feel. Yeah, I served 19[1/2] years in the U.S. Marine Corps and am a Vietnam veteran. The government was wrong about Vietnam, and they are wrong now. Wake up Alaskans, take pride in your state and don't let the Feds act like a dictator.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3 and 4.*

**31-Aug-01**

**Cullen L. Reece**

Comment: Mr. Killoran, if you are not the p.o.c. and are simply the network administrator, etc. could you please forward this to the proper people? I am having difficulty finding any link to send public comment, and most of the 'current news' is very out of date. I'm concerned with the USACE trying to close off mmotorized access to the Tanana Flats without giving a sound and solid reason. I hunt in the flats, and while I don't currently use an airboat or 4 wheeler, it may be something I would want or need to use in the future. So many of our public lands are being closed to public use every year, it sickens me to see this happen yet again with out any explanation. If the "Rex Trail" access is the issue, having private land owners complaining about people using the road that allowed their own property to be developed is hypocrisy. Without further explanation, I cannot imagine closing more of the flats than is already closed. With Native corporations enforcing their private property rights, and effectually closing the source of any drainage that crosses the impact area since the impact area is off-limits, I only see more rescue missions to the flats with stupid people wandering around lost in the alders because they cannot find their foot trails as easily as their 4-wheeler trails.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**31-Aug-01**

**Dan Givens**

Comment: The latest ban on off-road vehicles and airboats on the Tanana Flats is another barrier to being a good neighbor. Fort Wainwright and Fairbanks need each other to coexist. They could survive without each other, but they do better when working together. The proposal is bad for both. The

Army wants to make this now legal activity against the rules. What about the blight of crime committed against the community of Fairbanks by Army soldiers? This is already illegal, but continues without the Army taking a tougher stance against their own. Maybe the citizens of Alaska should quit rewarding military personnel by granting them hunting privileges while stationed here. Finally, a full scale investigation should take place to prevent any permanent fund money being given to any military people stationed in Alaska. It is for permanent residents - not stationed people who consistently lie about their intentions to stay in Alaska. I am against your proposed ban. I will make it my mission to investigate the previous complaints.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**31-Aug-01**  
**Elizabeth Hatton**

Comment: This letter is submitted as comment on the U.S.Army's Integrated National Resource Management Plan as it affects the use of airboats and off road vehicles on the Tanana flats. The Alaska Quiet Rights Coalition (AQRC) supports the limitations on both airboats and ORVs. AQRC is a statewide organization dedicated to maintaining Natural Quiet on a fair share of public lands for the benefit of non-motorized recreation and the preservation of wildlife habitat. Our members report that airboats have destroyed the peace and quiet, driven away wildlife and birds, disturbed habitats, and torn up vegetation in the Tanana flats area. These are noisy and destructive recreational toys that require strict controls to prevent serious damage. AQRC also supports the common sense approach to snowmachine limitations when the snow cover is inadequate. AQRC appreciates the Army's effort to be a responsible steward of these lands. Thank you for the limitations in the Management Plan and for this opportunity to comment. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**31-Aug-01**  
**Jennifer Parsons**

Comment: I also support banning airboats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**31-Aug-01**  
**Kathleen Vincent**

Comment: I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed ORV ban in the Tanana Flats. Summer use of ORVs is to be restricted, and since airboats are the only viable means of summer travel in the flats, they are to be effectively banned from the area. This is the most productive moose hunting grounds in the state-a fact we have been reminded of more than once this summer in Daily News Miner articles. I cannot understand why you would want to take this away from those of us who hunt in the Interior. I have not seen the document in which the ban is proposed, due to the limited availability of copies to the public, but I have heard that the army is concerned about the negative environmental impacts caused by airboats. I have spent time in the flats in an airboat and can testify that the impact is generally minimal. Yes, trails are visible in some of the more traveled areas, but with the watery environment and lush vegetation these are rapidly self-healing. Many people complain about airboats

being noisy. This is one of the reasons why we take them out to the flats rather than running them in other more public places. Forcing the airboats out of the flats and into the major waterways is only going to cause more conflict as canoeists have their peaceful commune with nature interrupted by the many passing airboats. It seems better to me to keep the airboats in the flats where they can only disturb each other. Another issue I have heard is that the army intends to use the land for training and is concerned about the safety of people traveling in the flats possibly encountering unexploded ordnance. I have to wonder why you are only concerned about the safety of those traveling the flats in the summer? After all, the ban does not apply to the snowmachine use in the winter. And wouldn't these training exercises have a negative environmental impact? Finally, I feel that the army has attempted to slip this issue past the public by burying it in a lengthy document that the general public would not typically read. Is this the kind of good neighbor policy we can expect from you? Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 8.*

**31-Aug-01**  
**Lane Thompson**

Comment: deceptive in that it makes it appear that the Army is trying to close off all access to the Tanana Flats, and suggested that instead they "commend the military for its stewardship of the Tanana Flats and for its efforts to preserve a valuable asset for Fairbanks residents through its proposed Natural Resources Management Plan". Of course the Assembly did not my suggestion but instead promised to pressure your superiors to allow increased use of airboats in spite of clear testimony that airboats force out traditional uses of the Tanana Flats. I applaud the Army for its efforts in the Draft Plan. If your superiors do water it down then in 20 years there will be only airboats, by the hundreds, misusing the Tanana Flats. Good luck.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**31-Aug-01**  
**Robert and Mary Parsons**

Comment: I hate the loud noise the airboats make and it scares game away and I support banning airboats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**31-Aug-01**  
**Robert Parsons.**

Comment: Hello. I support banning airboats from the Tanana flats, where they do damage.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**31-Aug-01**  
**Sonja L. Benson**

Comment: I'm writing in support of the ban on airboats in the Tanana Flats. Airboats are destructive to delicate wetland habitats, harmful to wildlife, and create a nuisance to others who use the land for various recreational purposes. Please accept my unequivocal support for banning the use of airboats in the Tanana Flats areas under the management of the U.S. Army Alaska. Thank you, Respectfully.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**2-Sep-01**

**Carl S. Benson**

Comment: I am writing in support of the Army's new environmental management plan which includes a ban on airboat use in the part of the Tanana Flats that is leased by the Army. Personally, I feel banning airboats in the Flats is the best idea since sliced bread. I am sure this view is shared by others who don't like incessant noise, destruction of delicate wetland habitat, and grossly unfair competition when hunting. There may be a place for airboats, but it is not in the Tanana Flats nor anywhere where people live. The noise is not merely a minor nuisance. It stops all other sounds. People with airboats have a much higher success rate in hunting than do people who can't afford them, or won't use them. People who are affected adversely by airboats include those who really depend on subsistence hunting to put meat on the table. I urge the Army to stand by its plan. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**4-Sep-01**

**W.D. Harrison**

Comment: Airboats on Flats. To the editor: As my house resonates to the roar of airboats bound for moose hunting on the Tanana Flats, I am reminded of a recent Borough Assembly meeting which passed an ordinance objecting to "the Army's proposal to restrict airboat travel to the main streams in the military part of the Flats. It was an impressive performance, led by the superbly organized Interior Airboaters Association. Most of the assembly members wore airboat stickers before they even heard testimony. Some of us wondered what the point of testimony was under such conditions, but it turned out to be an education just to be present. I heard (a) that 'preservationists' (people for airboat restrictions) were destroying the fabric of society, (b) that airboaters were just putting meat on the table for their needy families (few if any will do it below the store price of beef), and (c) that they believe in reciprocity: "Don't touch my airboat; I don't complain about your dog team." The logic appears to be that the impact of an airboat can be equated to that of a dog team. I also heard an assembly member say that by passing this ordinance we were protecting (against the ever-encroaching federal government) the rights of individuals. I was 'confused for a moment, Which individuals? Then I grasped the answer: the well-organized airboaters, of course, certainly not the hunters without \$40,000 airboats, the individuals who live or play within range of the noise, or the general public. The reality is that airboaters damage public lands (fly over the Flats and have a look) and destroy the public peace. Will the Army stick to its guns?

*Response: Comment noted*

**13-Sep-01**

**John Lyle**

Comment: I know the comment deadline is over but I wanted to write a brief message anyway, if that's ok. I am a hunter and fisherman and have used the Tanana Flats for recreation and hunting. I've lived here for 22 years. I, like many people, object to the use of airboats in that area. I really don't believe

that they have no impact on the vegetation or on wildlife. My ears are good, but not as good as many other animals, and I know that noise from airboats is extremely irritating to me. I only wonder about how it impacts animals with far more acute senses of hearing than I. I also am concerned about other forms of ATVs; their impact on both animals and the land. I know I'm at a severe disadvantage when I compete with hunters who have these machines. I don't know if any final decisions have been made, but wanted to send my comments for what it's worth. Thanks for listening. Sincerely,

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**14-Sep-01**

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Northern Alaska  
Ecological Services**

Comment: RE: Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan 2002-2006, Volume 3, Fort Wainwright. The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the June 28, 2001 Final Draft Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan 2002-2006 (INRMP) for Fort Wainwright (Volume 3). The Service supports the Army's approach of integrating long-term resource monitoring with protective strategies and planning. Long-term monitoring efforts are central to an adaptive management scheme such as the one presented in this document, and should play a prominent role in the INRMP. We found the organization of the 1998-2002 INRMP better suited to the adaptive management approach and easier to use due largely to the consolidation of monitoring and inventory plans in one chapter. We concur with the Army's assessment that large areas such as the Tanana Flats Training Area (TFTA) and Yukon Training Area (YTA) need an integrated approach to management. Chapter 5 of the INRMP is divided into 7 sub-chapters that address management, inventory and management for individual programs (Wetlands, Forestry, Fire, Fish and Wildlife, Endangered Species, Special Interest Areas, and Pest Management). Individual programs are less central to the task of managing these large areas than is an overall integrated approach to resource monitoring, inventory, and management practices that affect all of these resources. We recommend a simplified restructuring of the contents of this INRMP more along the lines of the 1998-2002 INRMP, and more conducive to an ecological approach to resource management. Airboat use in the wetlands of the Tanana Flats is a significant issue and deserves further attention in the INRMP. Airboat impacts to wetlands and water quality in the Tanana Flats have been monitored since 1990 (Racine et al. 1990). Recent monitoring indicates that the use of airboats is expanding in Interior Alaska. Air photo interpretation shows over 300 km of airboat trails by 1995, which was a 15% expansion of the trail system since 1989. In addition, data shows that by 1995 roughly one-half of the freshwater fens in the Tanana Flats had been traversed by airboats. The vegetation and soils of floating mat fens in the Tanana Flats have been severely damaged, with about 50% of the underlying mat destroyed, along the 100 km of main airboat trails (Racine et al. 1998). The floating mats play an important role in regulating the hydrology, nutrient availability, thermal conditions, water tables, and wetland succession (Hogg and Wein 1988). Floating mat fens of the Tanana Flats offer an extremely productive ecosystem, provide habitat for a variety of wildlife, and intercept groundwater that might otherwise be lost. There have been no studies that evaluate indirect impacts of airboats on hydrology, effects of airboat noise on wildlife, or conflicts between recreational users, airboaters



and the military. Page 183 of the Final Draft INRMP (Volume 3) describes restrictions on airboats using the TFTA. The INRMP states, “In the TFTA, airboats are not permitted to leave the channels of the Tanana and Wood rivers or any of the sloughs and creeks.” This restriction is worded differently on Figure 6-1a: “Airboats are permitted on the channels of Wood and Tanana Rivers, and Salchaket Slough outside of impact areas. They may not enter Tanana Flats.” We recommend that the restriction be more clearly defined by listing and mapping all stream channels where airboat travel is allowed (e.g., Tanana River, Wood River, and Salchaket Slough). Furthermore, while there are ample data to support this action (Racine et al. 1990, 1998), the INRMP fails to describe or summarize the data in support of the Army’s management decision. The Service supports the Army’s efforts to manage the impacts of airboats on the Tanana Flats by restricting airboats to major stream channels and avoiding impacts to adjacent wetlands. We also support limiting off-road vehicles (ORV) to established trails during non-winter months to minimize vegetation loss in wetland habitats. In addition, we recommend the Army more effectively present monitoring data that is being used to make land management decisions. We understand that the Army’s Section 404 Wetlands Permit (2000 to 2004) limits wetland impacts to 40 acres annually from all activities on Fort Wainwright, including construction, training, maneuvers, and public recreational use. The airboat and ORV restrictions would help preserve training opportunities for the Army’s military mission while limiting wetland impacts from non-military activities. We appreciate this opportunity to comment. Please contact Elaine Gross at 907-456-0209 if you have any questions regarding these comments. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. Recommended changes have been made to Section 6.2.4 and to Figure 6-1a to remove conflicting statements.*

**20-Sep-01  
Mo MacCracken**

Comment: Peace and solitude. To the editor: It is always my greatest pleasure to have a break in my summer work schedule to be able to come “home” to camp at Howard Luke’s camp on the Tanana River. Over the years I have always enjoyed the peace and solitude of the camp, the river, and the quiet of listening to the river and the Earth. Years ago in the times of low water, we would haul a canoe behind our boat in order to access deeper into the Flats and never felt the need for an airboat. Times change; people change; and I understand now that many people believe that airboats are indispensable, and provide the only access to the Flats and the only way to pack out a moose-how wrong, they are. I lie in bed in this quiet spot and it sounds as though I am in the middle of a traffic jam in a large city! The noise is absolutely numbing and it appears that there is no thought for those living in the midst of this airboat chaos. Why is it that these Alaskans feel the only way to access the Flats is the easy way -airboats and four-wheelers. What happened to canoes, what happened to “packin’ it out”-and what is happening to the peace and solitude of the true Alaska environment? I’d suggest we think hard on this decision and consider all of those that are effected/by these boats-and I thank the Army for their proposed ban and urge others to support the ban! Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**No date  
Amy Vogel**

Comment: I am writing in regards to the proposed ban on airboats on ORVs in the Tanana Valley Flats south of Fairbanks. I am totally opposed to this ban, That is the only place in the immediate area for airboats to use and they are not hurting anybody by that use. Please be more considerate in the future about passing regulations that affect so many of the local people for no apparent reason. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**No date  
Fairbanks Central Labor Council AF of L. - C.I.O.**

Comment: A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF FNSB RESOLUTION NO. 2001-52 WHICH OPPOSES THE MILITARY RESTRICTING OR PROHIBITING CIVILIAN ACCESS TO TRADITIONAL HUNTING AND TRAPPING GROUNDS LOCATED SOUTH OF FAIRBANKS IN THE TANANA FLATS WHEREAS, the Tanana Flats has been an important area for Fairbanks hunters, fishermen, boaters and trappers to satisfy their subsistence needs since the time when settlers first built this community, and WHEREAS, the area is currently used by individuals from all walks of life for hunting, boating, fishing, trapping, snow-machining, dog mushing, skiing, camping, outdoor recreating, and as a transportation corridor between Fairbanks and the Alaska Range; and WHEREAS, Fairbanks residents have a great love of the outdoors and believe access to this traditional wilderness area is an essential freedom that residents will strongly defend, and WHEREAS, the military has not demonstrated a substantive need to prohibit access by the Fairbanks community, and WHEREAS, the military is a valued part of our community and needs to be aware of the concerns Fairbanks residents have regarding access restrictions and prohibitions to lands traditionally used by residents of the Borough, NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Fairbanks Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO fully supports and endorses the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly Resolution NO. 2001-52 which strongly objects to the proposed plan by the military to restrict civilian access to this area and asks the military to remove this restriction and prohibition from its land use planning proposal. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to Senator Ted Stevens, Senator Frank Murkowski, the Interior Delegation, and Major General Jim Lovelace, Commanding General United States Army/Alaska. PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 20th DAY OF AUGUST, 2001. Brown, President Fairbanks Central Labor Council AFL-CIO

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 6.*

**No date  
Gary Farnsworth**

Comment: There has been no evidence that airboats are detrimental to your conservation goals. However, it would severely limit the harvest of moose before freeze-up. Will snow machines be also banned? When was this area last used for a military exercise? I.e. troops on foot.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, and 7.*

**No date**

**James Teders**

Comment: I and my family are astounded that the army would even consider closing the Tanana Flats to the people of Fairbanks. There is no logical reason for this and we are totally OPPOSED to this action.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**No date**

**Julia Awbrey**

Comment: My husband has been utilizing the Tanana Flats area for many years by means of airplane, air boat, jet boat, 4 wheeler, and snowmachine, for subsistence hunting for our family. I believe it is wrong for the Army to deny us access of our food source when there is really nothing they can use the land for (except maybe target practice) because the land is in the direct flight path of the Fairbanks International Airport. There isn't a whole lot of options for us to use our air boat in other areas. I believe if something isn't broken, don't fix it. Why take away a good thing for the whole community? Thank you for your time.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, and 6.*

**No date**

**Karen Jackovich**

Comment: I urge you to reconsider the banning of snowmachines, atvs s a and airboats from the Tanana Flats area. Closing this area would not only effect those of us who like to ride our atvs , snowmachines or take our airboats out. It would also adversely effect the moose population and those who hunt there , people who have hunted there for years would be forced to seek other hunting areas this could result in over hunting of those areas. Please consider the lifestyle of so many Alaskans and do not close this area.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 7.*

**No date**

**Leslea Nunley**

Comment: I am writing in regards to the proposed ban on airboats on ORVs in the Tanana Valley Flats south of Fairbanks, I am totally opposed to this ban. There is no scientific evidence to date that the flats are adversely affected by this use. That is the only place in the immediate area for airboats to use and they are not hurting anybody by that use. I am very disappointed that the Army would take this approach against the citizens of this area. I would venture to bet that your personnel will have continued use of this area, with motorized vehicles, during moose season for the reason of "patrol" or something similar. It is important that we all try to coexist and help each other. You are not acting like a "friendly neighbor". Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 6, and 8.*

**No date**

**Leslea Nunley**

Comment: In other words, I see no other reason for the ban other than the Army being spiteful and uncaring of the local residents of this area, especially the user groups that have traditionally used this area and have none other like it to use. I strongly protest this ban and will be one of the local residents that provides support as needed to sue if this ban is enforced. Sincerely.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**No date**

**Mark Leonard**

Comment: I am against the proposed restrictions on use of airboats, four wheelers and other O.R.V.s in the portions of the Tanana Flats civilian hunters have traditionally used. I urge you to delete that portion of your proposed plan.

*Response: Comment noted. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**No date**

**No Name**

Comment: ARMY PRO POSES TO CUT ACCESS ON TANANA FLATS. The United States Army is proposing to restrict ORV access on the Tanana Flats in their "Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan." The Plan covers Fort Wainwright. According to a "white paper" submitted by the Army, "USARAK (Army) is proposing to limit all ORV traffic during the summer months in wetland areas." These areas are being defined as any area outside a designated water channel. In addition, the plan calls for including airboats in the definition of "ORV." This would prevent airboats from utilizing trails they built, improved, and have accessed for decades. The Plan also calls for changes in winter enforcement policies with regard to snow cover. The Army has yet to define what constitutes an adequate snow cover, causing concern amongst winter snowmachine users. In response, the Alaska Outdoor Council coordinated with the Interior Airboaters, Alaska State Snowmobile Association, and Alaska Boating Association to extend the public comment deadline through the end of August. Also, they met with the military who later issued and circulated a "white paper" amongst sporting goods stores and public areas that outlined the changes. As admitted to by the Army, the Plan caught folks completely off-guard when it was printed in the Fairbanks Daily News Miner a day before the public comment period ended. According to several members of the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee, the Army deflected all questions and concerns that the Plan may restrict access during their May meeting. In turn, it was generally accepted access would remain "status quo." The Fairbanks Borough Assembly took the issue up August 23 and passed a resolution 8-2 that "strongly objects to the proposed plan by the military to restrict civilian access to this area and asks the military to remove this from its land -Use planning." Several access groups, including AOC, testified in support of the resolution in a packed chambers where public testimony ran 27-9 in favor. The Plan now goes before a military advisory panel for revision and/ or approval. A decision is expected in a couple months. The Plan can be read on-line.

*Response: Comment noted*

**No date**

**Paul Simmons**

Comment: I am writing in regards to the proposed ban on airboats and ORVs in the Tanana Valley Flats south of Fairbanks. I am totally opposed to this ban. That is the only place in the immediate area for airboats to muse and they are not hunting anyone by that use. Please be more considerate in the future about passing regulations that affect so many of the local people for no apparent reason. Sincerely. [21 additional signatures included]

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**No date**

**Roger Redfern**

Comment: We have a long history of use of the Tanana Flats. I arrived in Fairbanks in 1967. Friends, who had been hunting the swamps of the Tanana Flats since before statehood, introduced me to the swamps and my wife and I have been hunting there for 34 years, as well as enjoying summer fishing trips and picnics and winter snow machining. My son and my grandchildren use the swamps regularly. Sometimes the demands of work are such that I can't go on an extended hunt.. For those of us in that situation, the Tanana Flats are a blessing - we can run over there for an evening or early morning hunt. If the Flats were closed, no other place offers that convenient accessibility. The pans of the Flats we hunt are accessible only by airboat and are a preferred hunting ground for airboats. If we are denied use of the Flats by the Army, it will throw an incredible amount of pressure on other, all ready overcrowded, hunting areas, particularly the Chena, Salcha and Goodpaster Rivers - and, to the extent that people continue to use the navigable channels of creeks and rivers in the Flats (which the Army proposal would confine us to) there are serious safety concerns resulting from overcrowding of narrow, winding waterways. We do not harm the environment in any significant way, as the Army's own environmental report dated January 1990 concluded. And we do not interfere with training, since the swamps used by the Airboaters are not used or useable for training. The Tanana Flats are very important to us and to our way of life. The U.S. Army has been a reasonably good neighbor in the past. They need to continue to try to be good neighbors and, as a part of that, to continue to allow accesses to all customarily and traditionally used areas of the Tanana Flats.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8.*

**No date**

**Ronnie Redfern**

Comment: Among my earliest memories from childhood are happy evenings or days spent in the swamp - the Tanana Flats. This was before I even started to walk. In summertime, my Dad sometimes took the family for an evening ride across the Tanana and into the swamp for a picnic, a refreshing ride in the fresh air, sightseeing and perhaps a bit of pike fishing. Wild game, far from being disturbed by our airboat, stood to watch us go by. And in the Fall, hunting season was always a treasured experience. Crisp fall air, autumn colors, and the excitement of bagging moose, ducks and bear - the wholesome food that makes up most of our diet. And so it still is today. Now I take my children to the swamp on a summer evening or for hunting season, to share our precious

heritage. This swamp - the Tanana Flats - is a rich outdoor recreation site just beyond the outskirts of Fairbanks. Outdoor life, hunting and fishing, is an important part of why we live here. No other place around here offers such great recreation opportunities close to town. In addition, the swamp fills the meat needs of a good many Fairbanks families. The areas we hunt have never been used as a military training area and can't be used because they are swamp, so there is no conflict with the military mission. We do no environmental damage; the airboat "trails" are where the top of vegetation has been clipped (like mowing a lawn) but will grow back. What a shame for the military to shut off access to this important part of our heritage, especially where there is no gain to the Army - only loss - the loss of civilians' good will.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8.*

**No date**

**TIM MOWRY, Staff Writer**

Comment: Comment period extended on vehicle ban in Flats. The U.S. Army, responding to a barrage of criticism from hunters, has extended the deadline for public comment on a plan that would prohibit airboats, four-wheelers and other off-highway vehicles in the Tanana Flats. The Army received more than 70 comments following a story in the News-Miner a week ago that brought the proposed ban to light. Lt. Col. Victoria Bruzese told the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce board of directors on Monday. July 31 was the original deadline for public comment, but Bruzese said a decision was made Friday to extend the deadline to Aug. 31. Restrictions on off-highway vehicles are included in the Army's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan for the years 2002-2006. The proposal caused a firestorm of criticism from people who hunt moose on the Tanana Flats. Airboat owners were especially irritated because the swamp and bog of the Tanana Flats is the ideal place for their machines, which can skim over the top of the vegetative mat and reach areas other people can't get to in boats or on four-wheelers. Roger Redfern, president of the Interior Alaska Airboaters Association, said the deadline extension for public comment will allow his group to get word out to people to fight the proposal. The club is holding an emergency meeting at 7 p.m. today at the Frontier Lodge in Fairbanks to discuss its next move. "We're not going to back down on this thing," Redfern said, adding that the public is invited to attend. "We didn't even find out about this thing until the day before public comment was due." The association is looking into the possibility of taking legal action if the Army doesn't back off the ban, he said. While the plan was available for public comment for a month, many hunters were not aware of the restrictions on airboats and four-wheelers until a story appeared in the July 31 News-Miner. "After we got some comments we realized a lot of people hadn't gotten the word that comment period was under way," said Fort Wainwright public information officer Linda Douglass. Bruzese said the Army was caught off guard by the amount of comment after the proposed ban was publicized in the newspaper. "Could we have handled it better? Yes," Bruzese told the chamber on Monday, adding that she planned to examine how the situation was handled. She emphasized that nothing has been finalized and that public comments will be used to make a decision. "It is simply a proposal," Bruzese said. A copy of the plan is available at the Noel Wien Public Library and at the Natural Resources Office on Fort Wainwright. The Army



also plans to distribute a fact sheet, Douglass said. The Army also had the plan posted on its Web site, but people were unable to access the plan last week due to the Code Red virus that infected computers around the world. The military put a block on the Web site to prevent the virus from infecting its computers, meaning the only way to access the plan was from a military Web site, Douglass said. Anyone who wishes to comment on the Army's proposed ban on off-highway vehicles in the Tanana Flats can fax comments to 353-9867 or e-mail them.

*Response: Comment noted*

**No date**

**Floyd Buller**

Comment: I strongly oppose any changes in the usage of the Tanana Flats. I recommend the regulations stay the same as currently in use. I feel there is no need for changes.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**No Date**

**Interior Alaska Airboaters Association petition with 367 signatures**

Comment: We the undersigned strongly oppose the "Ban" on "Airboats" and destruction and/or removal of the trespass "Cabins" on the "Tanana Flats".

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**No date**

**Petition from unknown source, 1377 signatures**

Comment: We who sign below strongly oppose any ban on use in the Tanana Flats of airboats, four-wheelers, snow machines or other ORVs. We petition you to extend the public comment period on the proposed ban and to delete the ban entirely from your proposed Natura

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2, 3, and 8.*

**Dates Vary**

**Form Letter. 117 signatures.**

Comment: I do not agree with the Army's Integrated Natural Resource Plan for 1998-2001 which banned the use of off road vehicles and airboats from the Tanana Flats. The public was not even informed of this significant management change. I do not agree with the changes.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**Dates Vary**

**Form letter: 41 signatures.**

Comment: I am writing in regards to the proposed ban on airboats and ORVs in the Tanana Valley Flats south of Fairbanks. I am totally opposed to this ban. That is the only place in the immediate area for airboats to use and they are not hurting anybody by that use.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**29 July 2002**

**Gerald A. Richards**

Comment: I have reviewed the draft of the proposed study area as shown on Figure 6-1d, and I would like to make the following observations and comments:

1. The boundaries of the study area need to be more identifiable by following natural waterways or established trails. I have provided a revised map of my area for proposed changes which would accompany this. I propose to make the closed area for purposes of the study to be the area between Crooked Creek and Willow Creek. When you are in the field, both of these boundaries would be easier to identify than an arbitrary line extending to the east of Willow Creek.
2. I also propose to extend the boundaries of the open area to include all the land North of the Slachaket Slough, and to include all land west of the Bonnefield Trail and Clear Creek area as shown in Green on the attached map. Again, the main purpose of revising these boundaries would be allow a person to refer to a natural landmark when in the field, such as the Bonnefield Trail, Clear Creek, Willow Creek, and Crooked Creek.
3. In regards to the legend, I recommend the Summer Trails paragraph and the Winter Trails paragraph be moved to be subparagraphs of the Modified Use Area. I further suggest that the wording of these sub-paragraphs be modified as follows:  
  
Summer - Open to ORVs weighing less than 1,500 pounds or having a non-tilling surface pressure of 2.0 lbs. Per square inch or less. ORVs are restricted to existing trails, except during moose or bear season, an ORV may leave an existing trail for the sole purpose of salvaging a big game animal that has been killed. ORVs may not leave existing trails for any other purpose.  
  
Winter - Open to all ORVs when there is 6+ inches of ice or snow cover.
4. In regards to the legend, I further recommend the following wording change related to Motorized Watercraft Trails:  
  
Motorized Watercraft trails - motorized watercraft may use existing and naturally occurring channels, watercourses, waterways and sloughs. During moose or bear hunting seasons, a motorized watercraft may leave an existing or naturally occurring channel, watercourse, waterway, or slough for the sole purpose of salvaging a big game animal that has been killed.
5. In regards to the definition of Motorized watercraft trails on Figure 6-1d it is different from page 203 of the Draft INRMP. I request that the definition of Watercraft Trails be modified in both locations to be what I have recommended in item 4 above.

I believe the boundaries changes I have proposed simplify recognition of the restricted areas. Using natural landmarks helps a user identify an open versus a restricted area. It will also assist enforcement personnel in identifying what area they are in. If additional land is required for the study area, then I propose the sections of existing trail in the open area be flagged to change the traffic pattern. This way, you will be able to study recovery and regrowth along side of active use trails. Something similar to that is currently being done by the University of Alaska with the tripods and markings they have set up. Allowing ORVs that have a low lb. Per square inch of surface pressure is a good alternative to the proposed



restriction during summer use of the areas. Allowing ORVs to leave an existing trail or waterway for the sole purpose of retrieving and salvaging a big game animal is a good compromise on the use of the land. This rule supports the State of Alaska laws regarding salvage of meat from a big game animal. An animal that has been shot on or near an existing trail will often travel some distance before it dies. If you do not allow this modification, there will be some instances when the game becomes unsalvageable. Thank you in advance for your consideration of implementing my suggested changes to the boundaries and the legend for Figure 6-1d.

Study boundaries have been modified from those shown in the Draft Final Fort Wainwright INRMP to be more clearly identifiable and to allow USARAK to meet the Recreational Use Study objectives. The final study boundaries were delineated based on requirements necessary to conduct a valid scientific study and input from both ORV users of Tanana Flats, interested parties, and agencies.

*Response: The study as described using the zones presented in the Final Draft INRMP will not meet the study objectives. A significant area of the existing trail system needs to be closed in order to conduct recovery studies. In contrast, the area designated closed to recreational vehicles in the Draft Final INRMP for the purposes of these studies does not include airboat trails. Without closing high-use areas, changes in vegetation during recovery cannot be documented (see objectives 5 and 6). Changes in water flows and water levels in the trails cannot be documented without changing the use in the trail system (see objective 7). The impacts to wildlife cannot be assessed without closed areas free of noise and airboat use (see objective 8). The Draft Final INRMP study design did not allow documentation of the changes due to airboat use, therefore, the impacts of airboat use could not be determined.*

*Therefore, the study boundaries of zone 3 (closed area) have been changed to include an area bounded on the north by Clear Creek and on the south by Rusty Slough that includes heavily used airboat trails, as well as the area between Willow Creek and Crooked Creek.*

**1 August 2002  
Mark Albert**

Comment: Since 1981, I have hunted in the Tanana Flats Training Area. I've traveled on most of the creeks by boat and many miles of the trail system with lightweight off-road vehicles. Since the closures of bear and McDonald Creek through the Alpha Impact Area, I have not traveled on these two creeks. I have, however, witnessed boat traffic on both of them. As a group, we have worked to keep our ORVs to the 1500-pound weight limit as outlined in the current restrictions. The trails we use were plowed in by the military for training access or to fight fires. Trail conditions change from year to year depending on rainfall and beaver activities in the sloughs. There is more than a few miles of dry trail in the proposed winter use only sections. In my opinion, ORVs with high flotation capability do little or no permanent damage to the wet areas. After a year of rest, the previous year's track is usually just a different color of green grass, and after two years, the track is undetectable. The trail system is already there and is going to stay for many years to come. Traveling on these trails doesn't disturb anything new. Leaving the trail to retrieve the harvested game animal at random locations would have a very small impact, if any permanent impact on the area. In the past years, I have

noticed no change in the creek banks from erosion where we cross. In the fall of 1991, we witnessed military surplus SUSV track vehicles traveling many miles of trail in the TFTA during unfrozen conditions. These vehicles weigh approximately 10,000 pounds. I used a cell phone to call the number on my HTF permit to verify the use of the vehicles at this time, and was told they didn't know who to call. As a whole, the group of people I hunt with have attempted to keep the trail system intact. We want to return in future years to an area that can support lightweight off-road vehicle traffic. It wouldn't make much sense to destroy the trail that we have to travel to get home, would it?

*Response: Comment noted.*

**1 August 2002  
Steven Vincent**

Comment: Thank you for allowing me as a citizen of the Fairbanks area and a fee American with the ability to voice my opinions and concerns regarding the proposed FWA INRMP. The following are areas I would like to see changed. The boundaries of the study areas need borders based on natural waterways and existing trails and geographical landmarks. By not doing so, it would be near impossible to determine the boundaries without staking and flagging them, which will interfere with wildlife studies in the area, as some birds and animals avoid this type of flagging. I propose that the east and west boundaries of the closed area be simply Crooked Creek and Willow Creek, Area 1 at this time be designated an open area to be bordered on the east by the Bonnifield Trail to its intersection with Clear Creek, to the south by the bombing range, to the west by Willow Creek and its extensions, and to the north by the Tanana River. I propose that the regulations of ORVs be changed to ORVs under 1500 pounds, or having the surface pressure of less than 2.5 pounds per square inch, with a non-tilting type of propulsion. I believe this to be necessary because new products or devices not yet available on the consumer market that use large paddle-type tracks for propulsion. In the legend, I believe it's page 203, motorized watercraft trails regulation be changed to motorized watercraft may use existing and naturally occurring channels, water courses, waterways, and sloughs during moose and bear seasons. A motorized watercraft may leave an existing or naturally occurring channel, watercourse, waterway, or slough for the sole purpose of salvaging a big game animal that has been killed. This is necessary to be in compliance with the State of Alaska Fish and Game regulations. Since studies and statistics are often bent to serve the benefactor, I would like to see a requirement that the results of any studies in the Tanana Flats set forth by any enacted INRMPs be immediately available to the Fairbanks North Star Borough residents. Additionally, I would like to see quotes from any studies that are being used as a basis for INRMP regulations to include the footnotes made by the people that did the studies. Additionally, I would like to see pictures in the summer, winter, and fall concerning areas where they believe to be damaged by ORVs. Thank you very much for your time.

*Response: Study boundaries have been modified from those shown in the Draft Final Fort Wainwright INRMP to be more clearly identifiable and to allow USARAK to meet the Recreational Use Study objectives. The final study boundaries were delineated based on requirements necessary to conduct a valid scientific study and input from both ORV users of Tanana Flats, interested parties, and agencies.*

**1 August 2002**  
**Gerald Richards**

Comment: And I guess I would like to make a couple of comments. Some of the items that I'm concerned about are the boundaries that are currently proposed are difficult to find and locate in field locations. And I would like to propose that the closed area more closely follows Willow Creek and that the open area be slightly extended to include the Clear Creek southbound towards the Blair Lakes impact area. I think that would be a much clearer trail to follow. I have some concerns about the definitions in the legend. On Figure 6-1d, specifically the definition of motorized watercraft trails is inconsistent with the paragraph 6.24 in the INRMP on page 203. And I think that the definition in the INRMP should be changed to be consistent with the Figure 6-1d. Other things that I would like to see changed in the legend are somewhat confusing, I would like to see the summer trails and the winter trails be modified. I would like to drop the work "trails" from both of those definitions and move those to be subsections of the modified use area. So under my proposal, under modified use area, there would be a summer subsection, summer use subsection that would say, open to ORVs under 1500 pounds or with a nontilling surface weight of less than 2 pounds per square inch. ORV use limited to existing trails. An exception to that that I would propose would be to allow a hunter during moose or bear season to leave an existing trail for the sole purpose of retrieving and salvaging a big game animal that has legally be killed. And I don't think that would cause any significant impact to the environment by allowing that to occur. The winter definition I would change, again, and put it as a subsection under modified use area, and I would just call it winter use, open to all ORVs when there is six inches of ice or snow cover. Under motorized watercraft trails, I'm going to suggest one change there. And that would read, all motorized watercraft may use existing or - I would add the word "or" - naturally occurring channels, water courses, waterways and sloughs. The area to the north of Salchaket Slough currently has existing trails in that area that are used by all types of ORVs, and I would propose that that area north of the Salchaket Slough be reclassified as an open area instead of a modified use area. As far as doing studies on the trails, I would recommend that the tripod situation be used similar to what is currently being used by the UAF Arctic Institute of Biology, and use the tripods to block off sections of trails and use flagging in conjunction with that. And I think that would allow you to study an active trail that's currently being used and show how recovery and regrowth occurs when that trail is not being used. I guess in summary, I believe the boundary changes I propose simplify recognition of the restricted area. Using natural landmarks helps a person identify an open area vs. a restricted area. It will also assist enforcement personnel in identifying what area they really are in. Allowing ORVs that have a low hung per square inch of nontillable surface pressure is a good alternative to the proposed restriction for summer use of the areas, provided those - that use is restricted to an existing trail system, which I believe is what we previously had discussed. Allowing an ORV to leave an existing trail or waterway for the sole purpose of retrieving and salvaging a big game animal is a good compromise on the use of land. This rule supports the State of Alaska laws regarding salvage of meat for a big game animal. An animal that has been legally shot on or near an existing trail will often travel some distance before it dies. If you do not allow for this modification, there will be instances when the game

becomes unsalvageable. And again, I would think that this would not cause a negative impact on the environment by allowing that exception. And thanks for listening and taking my comments.

*Response: Study boundaries have been modified from those shown in the Draft Final Fort Wainwright INRMP to be more clearly identifiable and to allow USARAK to meet the Recreational Use Study objectives. The final study boundaries were delineated based on requirements necessary to conduct a valid scientific study and input from both ORV users of Tanana Flats, interested parties, and agencies.*

**1 August 2002**  
**Steven Coleman**

Comment: I'm an airboater and I've used the swamp since '74, probably, and I don't think we're really doing the damage that they think that's out there. I do want it open to the public to hunt and fish. I am against shutting it down. I guess that's it.

*Response: Comment noted.*

**1 August 2002**  
**Raymond Heuer**

Comment: First off, the comment from Gerald Richards, I would like to refer to that. First off, I would like to endorse the whole thing as a whole. And then I would like to emphasize on his comment here, in regards to the legend, I recommend the summer trails paragraph and winter trails paragraph be moved to be a subparagraph of the modified use area. I further suggest that the wording of these sub paragraphs be modified as follows: Summer open to ORVs weighing less than 1500 pounds or having a surface pressure of - and he says 0.15 pounds, but I would rather it be 2 pounds. I figured on my own surface area per square inch, I exert 2.18 pounds per square inch, just standing still on two feet. If I'm standing on one foot, it's twice that. And it's 4.46 or something. So an airboat exerts less pressure per square inch than I do walking. Okay. The other thing is, is I would like them to take into consideration that that area has been used for over 30 years by airboats with minimal impact. I mean, sure, there's a few trails, an if they overlay the natural occurring waterways to what they are considering trails, they will find that most of those trails are naturally occurring waterways, and that the hydrology is more or less - is more changed by beaver migration or numbers than air boat numbers. We'll I guess that's about it.

*Response: Comment noted.*

**1 August 2002**  
**Emma Lee Grennan**

Comment: My name is Ema Lee Grennan and I would like to submit these oral comments on the Fort Wainwright Integrated Natural resources management Plan. I reside in Fairbanks, Alaska, and am a user of Tanana Flats. Our family has traditionally and customarily used this area for decades. Although I do not agree with restricting airboat and ORV use in the Tanana Flats, I do with to make some comments concerning the draft of the proposed study area, number one, further to the south to allow more unrestricted access to users. My proposed boundaries would include the land north of the Salchaket Slough, and include all land west of Clear Creek and the Bonnifield Trail. Boundaries need to be established so a person can refer to a natural landmark to determine where they are I the Tanana Flats. How else can a user distinguish a restricted area versus an open area? The INRMP needs to be

changed to allow moose and bear hunters to leave waterways, sloughs, established water trails, etc. with ORVs who harvest a large moose or bear who has been killed. The State of Alaska law mandates that big game meat will be salvaged, or the hunter will be charged with the illegal offense of wanton waste of game meat. Boundaries of the study area need to be more defined, and I propose the closed area be between Crooked creek and Willow Creek. The current map boundary diverts out from Willow Creek. By making Willow Creek the boundary, users can better identify the closed area. ORVs which do not exert surface pressure of more than 2 pounds per square inch should not be restricted from summer trail classification stated in the legend of the map. Low surface pressure is not damaging to the vegetation of the area. Thank you for your consideration, Emma Lee Grennan.

*Response: Study boundaries have been modified from those shown in the Draft Final Fort Wainwright INRMP to be more clearly identifiable and to allow USARAK to meet the Recreational Use Study objectives. The final study boundaries were delineated based on requirements necessary to conduct a valid scientific study and input from both ORV users of Tanana Flats, interested parties, and agencies.*

**1 August 2002**

**Bill Ohman**

Comment: I guess my comments would be to leave the restrictions as least restrictive as possible, as close to the status quo. I just feel that the Flats are an important part of the recreational and traditional hunting area for Fairbanks area. That's the theme of my feelings towards it and we will just let it go at that.

*Response: Comment noted.*

**1 August 2002**

**Philip Granberry**

Comment: My first comment deals with the public notice and the way it was given. While I'm sure that great efforts were made to make public notices, and yes, there were advertisements, the Army maintains a database of everyone who has a hunting permit to be on the Army lands, much of which is the Tanana Flats area, and yet they did not use that mailing list to notify those people who obviously users of that area. So I would ask that in the future they consider that in their notification process. In regards to the draft map, the color coded map that has been presented, I would ask that they examine using natural features, existing creeks and streams as a manner in which to more clearly delineate the various use areas. One topic that needs to be addressed is if a hunter makes a shot in a legal area and then retrieve the animal, which proceeds after being shot in an open access area into what otherwise would be a closed area, that he be allowed to use whatever means he had accessed the open area with to go ahead and assist in recovery of the animal for harvest purposes. The legend of the proposed modification area I would like to see clarified. In using the term "trails", implies to me that there were some sort of established trail that one must contain themselves to. I don't believe that was the intent, and if they rail terminology and just refer to summer and winter without the trail terminology, I believe that would be more clear as to what is intended. I would ask in designating these areas, that it be kept in mind that if you look at the City of Fairbanks and the way it is surrounded by federal lands, either military bases and posts themselves or in the training areas, that when you block off all of those various pieces of land off, you've greatly restricted the land

available for recreational use by the citizens of the interior. And therefore, please use as few restrictions as possible because we have limited land once you remove those areas. That's it.

*Response: Study boundaries have been modified from those shown in the Draft Final Fort Wainwright INRMP to be more clearly identifiable and to allow USARAK to meet the Recreational Use Study objectives. The final study boundaries were delineated based on requirements necessary to conduct a valid scientific study and input from both ORV users of Tanana Flats, interested parties, and agencies.*

*Outside of the open are of the study, users are confined to trails.*

**7 August 2002**

**Karen Jackovich**

Comment: I am voicing my opposition to the 2002-2003 draft of the INRMP as it is written, the banning of orv from the tanana flat area during the summer/fall months will cause undo pressure on other areas. I have been airboating and snowmaking in this area for over 10 years and do not agree that the eco system is damaged>It is my understanding that that the airboat association has pictures of the area but they are never shown at any of your meetings wonder why?

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**12 August 2002**

**Karen Jackovich**

Comment: I am opposed to the 2002-2006 draft for the Tanana Flats area, that area has been used by orv for many years and to take it away even during the summer/fall season will cause undo stress on areas that allow orv use.

*Response: Comment noted. There is no proposed ban on recreational access into TFTA, except into impact areas. Please refer to responses 2 and 3.*

**14 August 2002**

**Arthur Hussey, Executive Director**

Comment: The Northern Alaska Environmental Center appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Fort Wainwright Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan. We applaud your continued efforts to resolve the difficult issue of protecting natural habitats in the sensitive Tanana Flats wetlands while allowing for normal military exercises and permitting appropriate civilian access. Our concerns stem not from the general intent of the plan, but rather from the details of the proposed study of the effects of recreational vehicles on wetlands. We feel that as written, the study may provide highly skewed results that will adversely affect management decisions in the future.

The Northern Alaska environmental Center first expressed support for the US Army's proposed Integrated natural resources management Plan for Fort Wainwright in August 2001. At that time, the draft plan specified that airboats would only be allowed on areas of high ground, and would not be permitted in wetlands. In our comments (8/20/01) we stated, "we feel that the new restrictions to these vehicles - as well as enforcement of existing restrictions - are appropriate, and show a fair balance between the desires of subsistence and recreational land users and the effective protection of the land and its resources." More specifically, our reasons for supporting the proposed INRMP were as follows:



- We supported the military's assertion that members of the general public should be expected to uphold at least as high a standard of behavior as members of the military, when using military land.
- Use of this land in the recent past has in many cases proven highly destructive to wetlands, which have federally protected status. This destruction has been documented, and moreover can be clearly seen on the ground and from the air.
- Destruction of wetlands has been accompanied by infringement on the habitat of game species and of protected species, including trumpeter swans and bald eagles. Once destroyed, wetland vegetation recovers slowly, if at all.
- The Army's draft plan did not restrict all use of the area, but rather restricted particular types of use during certain seasons.
- Use of this land in the distant past as an area for subsistence did not include the type of motorized incursions that are now taking place.

Since that time, alterations have been made in the plan. These alterations were intended to assuage some of the concerns of the local stakeholders, and to provide a more scientific basis for limitations placed upon motorized vehicle access in the Tanana Flats.

While we support the Army's decision to utilize a scientific study, we feel that a poorly conducted or heavily slanted study could prove more misleading and deleterious to the region than no study at all. We remain concerned regarding the following points:

- The three study areas - as defined in the final draft - have widely differing use patterns. The current zone 1 (unrestricted public access), which includes Salchaket Slough and Clear Creek, is a heavily used area with many trails and significant damage, while the current Zone 3 (closed area) appears to have no airboat trails in it at all. Zone 2 experiences an intermediate level of use. Comparing these areas may prove difficult, if not impossible.
- The 6/12/02 draft study plan likewise designated areas with widely differing use patterns, although the assignment of zones in that draft may have offered a better chance for the effective study of wetland recovery after closure of a heavily used area.
- The plan seems to have been altered for more socio-political reasons than for valid scientific reasons, and the alterations may in fact undermine the purposes for which the experiment was designed.
- In examining impacts, regardless of which criteria is assigned to which area, the existing degree of use and degradation must be established as a baseline in order to make the study meaningful. Furthermore, expected use for each area should be based on these baseline estimates of past use.
- However, if baseline values for existing degradation are zero or close to zero, mapping and measuring damage and recovery of wetlands and impacts on wildlife will not be possible.
- Areas that currently have highly differing levels of use are likely to continue to differ widely in the degree of pressure and impact from civilian users, regardless of how the experiment is set up.

For the above reasons, the Northern center feels that the final INRMP is likely to fall short of its stated goals. While we continue to support the Army's efforts to find a workable solution, and feel that the plan is a step in the right direction, we urge that the proposed study of wetland impacts not be used to provide misleading information on the scope and nature of the impacts of off-road vehicles on wetlands. Such misinterpretation could set back effective management measures by decades. Taxpayers' money would be wasted in the process. Furthermore, erroneous results might be used to make poor management decisions on other military, federal, or state lands.

If study zones with a more equitable level of current use cannot be delineated, then as an organization we would urge you to forego the study altogether, and revert to the original draft of the INRMP.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important matter.

*Response: Study boundaries have been modified from those shown in the Draft Final Fort Wainwright INRMP to be more clearly identifiable and to allow USARAK to meet the Recreational Use Study objectives. The final study boundaries were delineated based on requirements necessary to conduct a valid scientific study and input from both ORV users of Tanana Flats, interested parties, and agencies.*

*The study as described using the zones presented in the Final Draft INRMP will not meet the study objectives. A significant area of the existing trail system needs to be closed in order to conduct recovery studies. In contrast, the area designated closed to recreational vehicles in the Draft Final INRMP for the purposes of these studies does not include airboat trails. Without closing high-use areas, changes in vegetation during recovery cannot be documented (see objectives 5 and 6). Changes in water flows and water levels in the trails cannot be documented without changing the use in the trail system (see objective 7). The impacts to wildlife cannot be assessed without closed areas free of noise and airboat use (see objective 8). The Draft Final INRMP study design did not allow documentation of the changes due to airboat use, therefore, the impacts of airboat use could not be determined.*

*Therefore, the study boundaries of zone 3 (closed area) have been changed to include an area bounded on the north by Clear Creek and on the south by Rusty Slough that includes heavily used airboat trails, as well as the area between Willow Creek and Crooked Creek.*

#### **14 August 2002 Patrick Sousa, USFWS**

Comment: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reviewed the Final Draft 2002-2006 Fort Wainwright Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) and offers the following comments. In addition, please refer to our 14 September 2001 comments on the Draft INRMP, and our 31 January 2002 correspondence regarding the potential impacts of off-road vehicles on freshwater fens on the Tanana Flats. In the 31 January 2002 correspondence, we provided the Army with a literature review of freshwater fen ecology and potential airboat impacts.

In general, the Service finds the INRMP well-written and progressive in its approach to managing the natural resources on Fort Wainwright. Our review of the final draft INRMP focuses on the issue of wetlands management, and, in particular, the floating-mat freshwater fens of the Tanana Flats. We believe these habitats to be relatively unique and



potentially sensitive to disturbance, and therefore warrant careful attention and study. In our 31 January 2002 letter, we recommended the following research and monitoring of the wetlands on the Tanana Flats:

1. The detailed mapping and analysis of airboat trails via the use of color aerial photos (1:24,000 scale), and further monitoring of the use of those trails. The extent of the expansion of the AUA [Airboat Use Area] needs to be monitored and documented.
2. Further study of trumpeter swan habitat use, nesting ecology, and potential disturbance on the Tanana Flats. This work would include: mapping of habitat types used by nesting and brood-rearing swans, nest surveys to determine success in relation to airboat use, and the initiation of a database tracking weather data and swan nesting success (break-up, snowmelt, water levels, etc.)
3. The study of short and long term recovery rates of wetland vegetation affected by differing levels of airboat traffic.
4. Further study of the hydrology of freshwater fens, particularly those used by airboats on the Tanana Flats, including rates of flow, water depths/levels and connections to the Tanana River.
5. An analysis of changes in habitat created by extensive and medium airboat use and the potential effects these changes would have on wildlife.

In addition, the Service recommended the development of an airboat management plan, based on existing literature and the ongoing airboat study, for the Tanana Flats portion of Fort Wainwright. This plan should consider methods to achieve temporal and/or spatial separation of airboats and nesting swans.

As a result of recommendations and comments from agencies and the public, the Army has proposed a detailed study to assess the impacts of recreational vehicles on sensitive wetlands in the Tanana Flats. We commend and support the Army's effort to base management decisions on the best possible information.

The Army presented a Draft Proposed recreational vehicle Impact Study to agencies on 12 June 2002; the purpose of the study was to assess the impacts of recreational vehicles on sensitive wetlands, the study the effects of noise on wildlife, and to assess the impacts of management decisions on hunters and other recreationalists. During the proposed multi-year study, the Tanana Flats study area was proposed to be divided into three zones with differing levels of access:

1. Zone 1 would be open to all types of recreational use with no restrictions or limitations.
2. Zone 2 would be modified use - open to all types of recreational use year-round, except closed to off road vehicle (ORV) use during unfrozen conditions.
3. Zone 3 would be closed to all recreational vehicles and military vehicles.

On June 20, 2002, the Army hosted a Fort Wainwright INRMP Working Group meeting to discuss the Proposed recreational Vehicle Impact Study and to allow participants to provide input into the study site areas and boundaries. As of June 2002, Zone 1 (open to all types of recreational use and vehicles) included Willow Creek and the largest acreage of the three zones. Zone 2 (modified use) was bordered by Crooked Creek on the east and Wood River on the west. Zone 3 (closed to all military and recreational vehicles) was the smallest area and allowed for the use of Salchaket

Slough and Clear Creek on the main channels. These zones were intended to facilitate the study of airboat trails being used, the study of trails no longer used, and impacts of other management scenarios.

The Final Draft INRMP presents an outline of the Proposed recreational vehicle Study, but modifies all three study zones in the following manner:

- Zone 3, which included Salchaket Slough and Clear Creek, was enlarged and changed to Zone 1 (open without restrictions or limitations).
- Zone 1, which included Willow Creek, was made smaller and changed to Zone 3 (closed to all recreation and military vehicles).
- Zone 2, which included land between Wood River and Crooked Creek, remained the same.

These are significant changes to the proposed study zones, and will likely jeopardize the usefulness of the study. The majority of airboat trails exist in the new Zone 1 (open without restrictions), and it appears there are no airboat trails in the new Zone 3 (closed to recreational vehicles).

The Proposed Recreational Vehicle Impact Study listed the following study objectives:

1. provide a scientifically defensible definition of damage.
2. monitor the level of use in the zone with continued access.
3. determine the level of damage along the existing trail system at a large number of sites (100) using a rapid, semi-quantitative ranking system.
4. map the extent of the trail network using photography acquired in 2001.
5. establish an extensive network of photo-monitoring plots for assessing changes in impacts and recovery over a broad area over time.
6. establish a smaller network of intensive monitoring plots to assess impacts and recovery over the range of disturbance levels.
7. Assess hydrological impacts by monitoring changes in water flow and levels in trails.
8. Assess the impacts to wildlife using a phased-study approach that includes initial pilot-scale studies to identify the best approaches to quantifying impacts the first year, followed by more intensive monitoring work in subsequent years.
9. Conduct an experimental study of airboat traffic intensity to determine the "dose-response" relationships between level of traffic and level of damage to vegetation and hydrology.

The study as described using the zones presented in the Final Draft INRMP will not meet the objectives listed above. A significant area of the existing trail system needs to be closed in order to conduct recovery studies. In contrast, the area designated closed to recreational vehicles for the purposes of these studies does not include airboat trails. Without closing high-use areas, changes in vegetation during recovery cannot be documented (see objectives #5-6 above). Changes in water flows and water levels in the trails cannot be documented without changing the use in the trail system (objective 7). The impacts to wildlife cannot be assessed without closed areas free of noise and airboat use (objective 8). The study design does not allow documentation of the changes due to airboat use, therefore, the impacts of airboat use cannot be determined.

The Service supports the study of sensitive wetlands in the Tanana Flats for the purpose of making the best possible management decisions. We recommend protecting the integrity of the proposed Vehicle Impact Study by using zones similar to what was proposed in the 12 June 2002 study proposal, which would include a contiguous area of airboat trails where recovery can be evaluated.

We appreciate the Army's efforts to resolve these issues, as well as this opportunity to comment. Please contact staff biologist Neesha Wendling at 907-456-0297 if you have any questions regarding these comments.

*Response: Study boundaries have been modified from those shown in the Draft Final Fort Wainwright INRMP to be more clearly identifiable and to allow USARAK to meet the Recreational Use Study objectives. The final study boundaries were delineated based on requirements necessary to conduct a valid scientific study and input from both ORV users of Tanana Flats, interested parties, and agencies.*

*The study as described using the zones presented in the Final Draft INRMP will not meet the study objectives. A significant area of the existing trail system needs to be closed in order to conduct recovery studies. In contrast, the area designated closed to recreational vehicles in the Draft Final INRMP for the purposes of these studies does not include airboat trails. Without closing high-use areas, changes in vegetation during recovery cannot be documented (see objectives 5 and 6). Changes in water flows and water levels in the trails cannot be documented without changing the use in the trail system (see objective 7). The impacts to wildlife cannot be assessed without closed areas free of noise and airboat use (see objective 8). The Draft Final INRMP study design did not allow documentation of the changes due to airboat use, therefore, the impacts of airboat use could not be determined.*

*Therefore, the study boundaries of zone 3 (closed area) have been changed to include an area bounded on the north by Clear Creek and on the south by Rusty Slough that includes heavily used airboat trails, as well as the area between Willow Creek and Crooked Creek.*

**15 August 2002**

**Roger Redfern, President, Interior Alaska Airboat Association**

Comment: Our organization represents about 250 members, and about 1000 citizens including spouses and family members. We would like to see some modifications made to the proposed INRMP related specifically to the Tanana Flats Training Area. Primarily our changes relate to Section 6.2.4 Outdoor Recreation Management on pages 202 through 209 and to Figure 6-1d.

1. The boundaries of the study area need to be easily identified when you are out in the field. Accordingly, we propose the following two changes: A) Make the closed area for purposes of the study to be the area between Crooked Creek and Willow Creek. These are landmarks that should be able to be readily identified. B) Likewise, you should adjust the East boundary of the open area to include the slice of land behind Clear Creek Buttes so that it follows Clear Creek South of the where the Bonnefield Trail crosses Clear Creek. At the end of the open area along the creek, you could post a sign notifying a user that he was entering a modified use area. This would be good to help recreational users identify which area they really are in.

2. In regards to the legend on Figure 6-1d, we recommend the Summer Trails paragraph and the Winter Trails paragraph be moved to be sub-paragraphs of the Modified Use Area. We further suggest that the wording of these sub-paragraphs be modified as follows:

Summer - Open to ORVs weighing less than 1,500 lbs or having a non-tilling surface pressure of 2.0 lbs. per square inch or less. ORVs are restricted to existing trails, except during moose or bear season, an ORV may leave an existing trail for the sole purpose of salvaging a big game animal that has been killed. ORVs may not leave existing trails for any other purpose.

Winter - Open to all ORVs when there is 6+ inches of ice or snow cover.

3. In regards to the legend on Figure 6-1d, we also recommend the following wording change related to Motorized Watercraft Trails:

Motorized Watercraft Trails - Motorized watercraft may use existing or naturally occurring channels, watercourses, waterways and sloughs. During moose or bear hunting seasons, a motorized watercraft may leave an existing or naturally occurring channel, watercourse, waterway or slough for the sole purpose of salvaging a big game animal that has been killed.

4. In regards to the definition of Motorized Watercraft Trails on Figure 6-1d it is different from page 203 of the Draft INRMP. We request that the definition of Watercraft Trails be modified in both locations to be what we have recommended in item 3 above. In fact, all definitions on page 203 should be modified to be consistent with final wording used in the legend for Figure 6-1d.
5. We have been in touch with the group doing the extended study of the area. We plan to take Mr. Racine into the field to identify an area within the open area that could be flagged and closed for use in the study. The area we have in mind has been used as an airboat trail for many years, and can easily be flagged off to stop airboat traffic through that area. There are alternate routes that can be used without totally cutting off transportation. A detailed map will be provided in the near future.

Changing boundaries slightly as we have proposed above will have no negative effects and will also assist your enforcement personnel in identifying whether a person is in an open, a closed or a modified use area. Allowing ORVs that have a low lb. per square inch of surface pressure is a good alternative to the proposed restriction during summer use of the areas. Allowing ORVs to leave an existing trail or waterway for the sole purpose of retrieving and salvaging a big game animal is a good compromise on use of the land. This rule supports the State of Alaska laws regarding salvage of meat from a big game animal. An animal that has been shot on or near an existing trail will often travel some distance before it dies. If you do not allow this modification, there will be instances when the game becomes unsalvageable. Thank you in advance for your consideration of implementing our suggested changes to the boundaries, the definitions and the legend for Figure 6-1d.

*Response: Study boundaries have been modified from those shown in the Draft Final Fort Wainwright INRMP to be more clearly identifiable and to allow USARAK to meet the Recreational Use Study objectives. The final study boundaries were delineated based on requirements necessary*

to conduct a valid scientific study and input from both ORV users of Tanana Flats, interested parties, and agencies.

*The study as described using the zones presented in the Final Draft INRMP will not meet the study objectives. A significant area of the existing trail system needs to be closed in order to conduct recovery studies. In contrast, the area designated closed to recreational vehicles in the Draft Final INRMP for the purposes of these studies does not include airboat trails. Without closing high-use areas, changes in vegetation during recovery cannot be documented (see objectives 5 and 6). Changes in water flows and water levels in the trails cannot be documented without changing the use in the trail system (see objective 7). The impacts to wildlife cannot be assessed without closed areas free of noise and airboat use (see objective 8). The Draft Final INRMP study design did not allow documentation of the changes due to airboat use, therefore, the impacts of airboat use could not be determined. Therefore, the study boundaries of zone 3 (closed area) have been changed to include an area bounded on the north by Clear Creek and on the south by Rusty Slough that includes heavily used airboat trails, as well as the area between Willow Creek and Crooked Creek.*

**20 August 2002**

**Alvin Ott, Alaska Department of Fish and Game**

Comment: The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has reviewed the above referenced draft management plan and has the following comments:

- Page 189, 3rd paragraph, second sentence states, "Hunters may continue to use airboats to hunt in the TFTA, although airboats must comply with the requirements stated above." Again, Page 190, 1st paragraph, second to last sentence states, "...USARAK may choose to place limitations on recreational use as described above." I could not find where the requirements had been stated "above." The ADF&G believes this is an important issue, so the information, i.e., "requirements stated above", should be spelled out clearly and as often as possible within this section.

- Figure 6-1a. Under Legend, Modified Use Area, it should read (6+ inches of **ice and** snowcover).

- Figure 6-1d. Under Legend, Modified Use Area, it should read (6+ inches of **ice and** snowcover).

- We recommend that the study plan be subjected to a thorough scientific peer review prior to implementation. It is imperative that the study is designed such that the specific objectives for assessing the nature and extent of the impacts and the potential for recovery are both achievable and defensible.

- The Wildlife Conservation Division is concerned about the potential loss of hunting opportunity in the proposed recreational use study area, particularly in the "closed areas (Zone 3)". Approximately 500 hunters pursue bull moose on Ft. Wainwright lands in GMU 20A during the general season. In addition, several hundred hunters pursue antlerless and calf moose under drawing permit hunt conditions. The goals of the antlerless and calf hunts are to provide additional opportunity for hunters to bag a moose in light of recently imposed antler restrictions in Unit 20A and to keep

the high-density moose population in the central portion of the unit from increasing in size because of concerns regarding habitat quality. Because non-motorized access (e.g., foot, canoe) likely has no measurable effect on the landscape, we recommend that non-motorized access not be restricted in these areas. This would help the division meet its management goals without compromising the results of the study. In addition, we suggest that the boundaries of the "closed areas" be moved back from the river at least 1/2 mile to allow hunters motorized access to the south bank of the Tanana River and the numerous sloughs and mouths of small streams emptying into the river. Many hunters report accessing the south bank of the Tanana River with motorized watercraft and then use canoes to access areas farther inland.

- It is unclear whether airplanes will be allowed to land in the "closed areas." Because airplanes land either on dry ground or in water on floats, we recommend that airplane access not be restricted.

If you have any questions concerning the comments above, please contact Nancy Ihlenfeldt at 907-459-7287.

*Response: The information in the Legend in Figure 6-1d has been added to the 3rd paragraph on paragraph on page 189 to clarify the requirements of recreational vehicle use. The recreational use study paragraph on page 190 has been clarified to read as follows "During the multi-year study, the study area will be divided into three parts. Zone 1 will be open to all types of recreational use with no restrictions or limitations. Zone 2 will open to all recreational activities during frozen conditions (6+ inches of ice and snowcover) and will be open to all non-motorized recreation year-round, including hunting. In addition, all motorized watercraft may use only existing naturally occurring channels, watercourses, and waterways. Motorized watercraft must maintain safe and prudent speed at all times. Zone 2 is open to ORVs during frozen conditions. Summer trails in Zone 2 are open to ORVs under 1,500 pounds (ATVs, snowmachines, dirt bikes etc.) all year-round. Summer trails are open to ORVs over 1,500 pounds (road vehicles, dune buggies, Argos, SUSVs etc.) when there is 6+ inches of ice and snow cover. Winter trails are open to all ORVs when there is 6+ inches of ice and snow cover. Zone 3 will be placed totally off-limits to all military and recreational vehicle use (except those involved in the study). Zone 3 will be open to non-motorized forms of recreation, including hunting. Hunters are allowed motorized access to the south bank of the Tanana River bordering Zone 3, but must park motorized vehicles on the shore and use non-motorized forms of transportation to gain access into Zone 3. In addition, all approved airstrips and open water remain open to airplane use. Zone 3 must include currently used airboat and ATV trails for the study to evaluate regeneration. The closed area must also be large enough to evaluate the exclusion of noise impacts on wildlife. The proposed study boundaries are shown in Figure 6-1d. The study boundaries may be subject to modification based on the requirements of the experimental design parameters." The Legend in Figure 6-1d has been updated to read "6+ inches of ice and snow cover" under Modified Use Area. USARAK agrees to conduct a thorough scientific peer review of the study plan.*

